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'This is not just a military operation. It is an attempt to smash a country'



Robert Fisk witnesses the Israeli attack that left 'a land without people'

Mansuri, southern Lebanon - It was heartbreaking. As the shells swished over the village, the last of its people came walking in tears through the long grass, out of basements, down the stone tracks from their poor cement houses towards the United Nations soldiers.

One young woman carried her two-month-old baby and clutched it to her breast in our car, her tears splashing on to the child's shawl. The oldest woman in the village sat next to her, well over 80, her lips and cheeks tattooed in the way girls adorned their faces in the days of the Ottoman empire. One man had wrapped his ears in bandages to deaden the crack of the Israeli artillery on the hill above.

North of us, across the orange orchards and villages of southern Lebanon on this beautiful spring afternoon, sprouted mushroom clouds of white and grey smoke as the Israeli jets worked over the little hamlets with their cheaply-built minarets and pot-holed roads. All of Tyre was to be evacuated by dusk, the Israelis had ordered. This was to be a land without people. As the shells whizzed over us, a French UN colonel led an elderly woman in a bright blue "abaya" gown to our jeep. Once inside, she placed her front-door key on the fringe of her scarf, knotted it safely inside the material, and



Shot in the dark: An Israeli artillery unit takes cover as its 155mm gun fires another shell into southern Lebanon from a position on the border

Photograph: Jim Hollander/Reuters

tucked it into her dress. Then she put her head in her hands. All day, driving the hot, frightening roads of southern Lebanon, we had heard the news from Beirut. The Israelis had blown up the electricity switching station at Hazmieh, cutting electricity from much of the capital. Their jets had raided the southern suburbs of the city for the third time, attacking what the Israelis claimed - and the word "claimed" needs

to be repeated these days - were Hizbollah offices. But the Israeli jets sweeping across Lebanon yesterday were on more than a military operation. For what is happening in Lebanon today is a concerted attempt by Israel to smash this country, to enfeeble its government, to overwhelm its resources with up to half a million refugees, to cut its electricity supply system at the very moment when the nation is recovering from a horrific war in which Israel itself had been involved. Israeli-controlled radios in southern Lebanon were yesterday demanding further evacuations from villages north of Tyre and threatening to bomb road bridges. They have already closed Beirut port.

So Lebanon - and the pattern of attacks and threats against the civilian population all point in this direction - is to be impoverished and, if the port

blockade continues, to be starved. And why? To persuade, as the Israelis claim, a vulnerable Lebanese government to disarm the Hizbollah and thus make more comfortable Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon? Or to make Lebanon weak enough to make peace with Israel, a separate peace which would isolate Syria, a peace made by a country that would be as weak as the PLO and Jordan were when they

were brought to the table to talk to the Israelis? And in the real world of Lebanon the simple question has to be asked. Would the Israelis have embarked on such a massive military operation at such enormous cost (albeit at the expense of the American taxpayer), just to avenge the wounding of five Israelis by Katyusha rockets, an assault that was itself retaliation for the killing of a Lebanese youth?

For weeks now, there have been hints from Israeli ministers that Lebanon should make a separate peace with Israel, that it should ignore Syria, that Syria should be isolated for its supposed intransigence in peace negotiations over the Golan Heights. For this war is a message to the Syrian leader, President Assad, a demonstration in its very backyard of what happens to those who do not want to make peace with Israel.

Inside
Hizbollah threat hangs over Israel 400,000 flee bombardment page 10
Leading article page 14

In any event, the Hizbollah are not beaten. Driving out to Mansuri through the shellfire yesterday, a clutch of Katyusha rockets swished upwards to our right from behind a stand of pine trees, the missiles aimed at the Israeli town of Nahariya. Within minutes, two Apache helicopters appeared in the sky above us like angry bees.

A pilotless drone reconnaissance aircraft buzzed ominously over us as we pulled up at the village to extract the last of its inhabitants. "We don't like to help the Israelis vacate the villages," Swedish UN Captain Mikael Lindval said as an unshaven man poured animal feed in a bucket in front of his tethered mule and patted the beast goodbye.

"But when the people want to leave because of the bombing, we try to help them."

In another country, with another UN convoy, I had watched the same scene only three years ago. Then, the UN officers said they felt as if they were helping the Serbs to "ethnically cleanse" the land by taking away the villagers.

Yesterday, in a village which boasts one mansion with a lawn as meticulous as a golfing green but with most of its homes mere concrete shacks, its lanes bordered by red roses and yellow flowers and trees of bitter-tasting peaches, we loaded the last of Mansuri's people aboard the UN lorries and took them from the village in which almost all of them had been born. And we were, of course, doing exactly as the Israelis would have wished.

Blair's joy cut short by new tax row

JOHN RENTOUL and BARRIE CLEMENT

Tony Blair, basking in the glow of his triumphant return from America and the Staffordshire South East by-election victory, yesterday found the left wing of his party eager to undermine his drive to make Labour the "party of the centre".

Clare Short, the party's transport spokeswoman, disrupted his attempts to present Labour as the party of middle-class tax cuts when she said people on her £34,000-a-year MP's income should pay more tax.

Roy Hattersley, the former deputy Labour leader, renewed his attack on Mr Blair, accusing him of having changed his mind since supporting extremist policies in the early 1980s. His comments were backed by Rodney Bickerstaffe, leader of Labour's largest affiliate, the public services union Unison.

And Labour's socialist conscience in the House of Lords, Barbara Castle, warned that co-



operation with Wall Street and the City "must not become capitulation". Ms Short said on GMTV: "I think in a fair tax system people like me would pay a bit more tax." Asked whether her comments had been cleared with Mr Blair, she said: "It's cleared with me. I speak for what I see to be the truth."

TURN TO PAGE 2

Labour to woo British Gas by scrapping regulator

CHRIS BLACKHURST Westminster Correspondent

Labour is planning to relax controls over British Gas by scrapping Ofgas, the power industry regulator.

The move, to be unveiled in a policy document next month, comes as Ofgas is once again at daggers drawn with British Gas, this time over fears that the regulator plans to cut profits of the company's soon to be hived off pipeline business by £700m.

In a dramatic shift, Labour is keen to reach an accord with British Gas, still seen as a pariah by many on the left. Part of that accommodation will entail the easing of restrictions on a company whose bosses have been paraded as "fat cats" and whose billion-pound profits have been repeatedly attacked.

John Battle, MP for Leeds West and frontbench energy spokesman, has been holding

talks with British Gas chiefs to try and devise a new regulatory structure. They have been stressing to Mr Battle their unhappiness with Ofgas and its head, Claire Spottiswood.

Mr Battle has been surprisingly receptive, making plain his desire to remove the personalities from energy regulation and to achieve a greater consistency of approach in the different sectors.

As head of Labour's regulatory task force, Mr Battle will report next month on the outcome of the talks which have also involved other utility operators and public interest groups. He is keen to stress that those in his party who have what he terms a "1940s to 1960s mindset about utilities" will have their hopes of possible renationalisation dashed.

Instead, he said a new Labour government would work closely with the companies

and encourage them. "Energy companies are a major contributor to the economy. There is a vendetta against the former nationalised industries that says they should be smashed up."

But, said Mr Battle: "We've got top British companies in our former nationalised companies. They are major employers, in the league of the top 50 companies in Britain, the top 100 companies in the world. I can't believe our aim should be to withdraw those companies from the international scene."

British Gas, he said, "has got years of credibility and expertise in the bank. I don't want to see that evaporate now."

It was crucial, said Mr Battle, that the regulatory framework is simplified to make the companies' lives easier. "I do not want them to be like Gulliver, tied down with millions of little ropes. That is the problem with over-regulation."

Under the task force's current thinking, Ofgas and Offer, the power regulator, would go to be replaced by one joint watchdog. A beefed-up Monopolies and Mergers Commission would play a greater role in determining competition issues, releasing the new body to cover problems with supply and pricing.

On the issue of pricing, the existing "RPI minus X" formula - where prices are based on the rate of inflation less a percentage set by the regulator - would probably stay, but with what he called an "error correction mechanism" to clawback profits on a sliding scale if they proved too high.

As long as a company continued to serve all strands of society, their profits would not be an issue for a Labour government. "Provided they maintain their social obligations, the size of their profits is up to them."

IN BRIEF

Sex abuse claims
Many children who had the courage to speak out about sexual abuse were not believed, according to a study. Page 3

Return of the otter
The otter is storming back into England and is pushing back the much-loathed mink, a new survey shows. Page 5

Today's weather
Rain in the North, drier in the South. Section two, page 29

Beans means cuts in supermarket wars

STEVE BOGGAN

Britain's biggest supermarket chains have introduced baked bean rationing because of a 3p-a-can price war.

Shoppers at Tesco, Asda and Kwik Save were yesterday limited to four tins each to prevent smaller retailers from stocking up and re-selling them.

The beanfeast began last month when the big chains cut

the price of their own-brand baked beans to 3p in the face of tough competition from discount stores such as Aldi and Netto. Since then, the price has been cut twice more and rationing - first at five tins, then at four - has had to be introduced.

Yesterday, Tesco reduced the price of its Value brand to just 3p, accepting a loss on every can in an attempt to carve out a larger

share of the £250m-a-year market.

Nicole Lander, a spokeswoman for the company, said: "In response to competition from other supermarkets we have now made the decision to reduce our line to 3p. Our customers are finding the offer very, very attractive. It's so popular that we have had to reduce the number of cans they can purchase to four."

Despite increases in sales of supermarket brands, Heinz, which sells 1.5 million cans of beans a day - 52.4 per cent of the market - was holding its price steady at 33p.

According to *The Grocer*, the retail trade magazine, its rivals' prices are the lowest for 101 years.

Historians at Heinz, which introduced tinned baked beans in 1901, say beans were by no

means the cheap product they are today. They were introduced to the market at nine old pence - the equivalent of £1.50 at today's prices.



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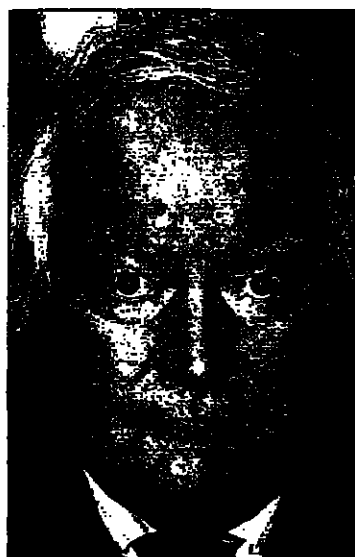
Prime suspects in Tory defector hunt



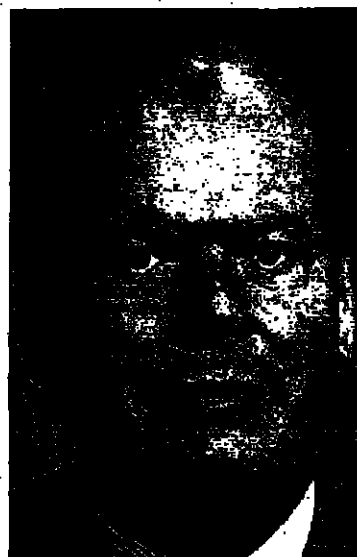
Peter Temple-Morris, 58, said in an interview last month that if he had his time in politics again he would probably join "New Labour".



Edwina Currie, 49, stood unsuccessfully for the European Parliament two years ago, regarding it as more important than Westminster.



Julian Critchley, 65, is totally against a referendum and, even before last week's by-election, warned of Mr Major's one-vote majority: "I'm it".



Quentin Davies, 51, nearly ensured the Government was defeated over the Scott report on arms-to-Iraq, and has since advocated a single currency.



Sir David Knox, 62, co-signed a letter headlined "Single currency not a pipe dream" to the Times in December, but has promised to stay loyal.



Hugh Dykes, 56, declared he was "a lifelong Tory", but rebelled in last year's EU fish quotas vote - in protest at Mr Major's Euro-sceptical stance.

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Major on the brink: Two MPs are said to be ready to quit. Who are they?

Conservative fears of further Commons defections in the wake of Labour's crushing by-election victory on Thursday were intensified by a weekend report that two unnamed MPs have held secret talks with members of the Shadow Cabinet and Tony Blair's office.

The report, which was not denied by a spokesman for Mr Blair yesterday, said the MPs were ready to join Labour if Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had resigned over the Prime Minister's plan to promise a referendum on a single European currency.

A further defection would wipe out John Major's Commons majority - cut to one by the election of Labour's Brian Jenkins in Staffordshire South East last week. The Government's survival in a vote of confidence would then depend on the nine-strong Ulster Unionist Party, led by David Trimble, and Ian Paisley's three Democratic Unionist Party MPs.

Speculation yesterday centred on strong pro-Europeans, including Peter Temple-Morris, Edwina Currie, Julian Critchley, Quentin Davies, Sir David Knox and Hugh Dykes.

Mr Temple-Morris, who recently set up a "One Nation" Tory think-tank called the Macleod Group, was in trouble with some members of his local Tory association in Leominster. But the rebels were unable to muster the 50 signatures required on a petition to reopen the choice of the urbane, white-haired former solicitor as the Tory candidate for the next election.

Mr Temple-Morris was for years the leader of the "One Nation" Tory faction in the Commons, as head of a group called the Lollards which organised to win internal elections to backbench committees. His factional instincts - "we have to stay and fight" - suggest he will be loyal, but his grave manner conceals a wicked enjoyment of ideological battle which might tempt him to go.

Mrs Currie has been intensely frustrated by the failure of pro-Europeans in all parties, but especially the Tories, to push their arguments more vigorously. In recent months she has worked closely with Labour MPs Giles Radice and Peter Mandelson in the cross-party European Movement to promote the arguments for a single currency.

She built her reputation as a combative and partisan Tory, but has espoused causes - such as equal rights for homosexuals - more in tune with the Liberal Democrats or possibly Labour than her own party.

Mr Critchley, biographer of the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, publicly warned that he would vote against a referendum on a single European currency - not that the promise, which will go in the Tory manifesto, will be voted on in the Commons until after the election, if ever. He is unwell, but still comes to the Commons for knife-edge votes.

Tory pro-Europeans would have been heartened, however, by the weekend declaration by their standard bearer, the Chancellor, that Britain would still be able to join a single currency if it did not join a new exchange rate mechanism.

But the depths of Tory pessimism about the general election, which must be held within 13 months but increasingly looks like being earlier, was underlined by a *Sunday Times* survey of MPs.

Of 100 Tories questioned, 46 said they thought Labour would win, and a further 20 predicted a hung Parliament.



Powerful message: Leo Lester, 14, from Peckham, south-east London, drives around Parliament Square in a Second World War tank on his way to Downing Street yesterday where he parked outside the security gates leading to Number 10 and delivered a copy of a new CD-Rom educational material entitled *Images of War*. Photograph: Edward Sykes

Gromit's creator gets animated over Bafta

LOUISE JURY

Nick Park, the triple-Oscar-winning animator, last night accused organisers of Britain's top film and theatre awards of belittling his work by excluding animation from their main ceremony.

The creator of Wallace and Gromit appealed to the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (Bafta) to reinstate the animation categories in the event, to be held next week. Bafta justified its decision on grounds that television companies had asked it "to cut down on the number of awards made at the main ceremony".

Park's plea came at the less glamorous Bafta craft awards, held at the Hilton Hotel, London, where technicians were honoured for their skills.

Emphasising that British animation had undergone a renaissance, he suggested to Bafta that animators had been sidelined by their exclusion from the main ceremony. "We... have become the little people," he said.

Last night a Bafta spokesman said that there would be a special award ceremony on 26 April to mark achievements in animation.

Park, whose films *Creature Comforts*, *The Wrong Trousers* and *A Close Shave* have been huge successes, made his appeal as he collected the television award for originality.

"I know we are not good-looking or glamorous, but what we really enjoy is being with good-looking and glamorous people. So if you could do something about it that would be wonderful."

UDA linked to £1m raid in Belfast

DAVID McKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

A £1m robbery in Belfast at the weekend was the work of a major loyalist paramilitary group, according to reliable security sources in the city.

Police have discounted original reports that the IRA might have been responsible, and now believe the robbery, one of the Northern Ireland's biggest, was carried out on behalf of the illegal Ulster Defence Association. Yesterday, a man was in custody for questioning.

On Saturday morning gunmen forced their way into the home of a Securicor employee in Taughmonagh, a loyalist housing estate in south Belfast. They bound and gagged the man's wife, his father-in-law, a boy of 14 and his brother-

in-law, who is handicapped. The employee was ordered to go to a Securicor depot, collect the money and take it to an isolated spot on the outskirts of south Belfast. He and a colleague were then held by three armed men who handcuffed and hooded them and made off with the cash.

A fresh attempt is being made to extradite terrorist suspect Anthony Duncan from Ireland to Britain, after the first bid collapsed, it emerged yesterday. Duncan, 26, wanted in connection with a 1994 British bombing campaign, walked free from an Irish district court on Friday when the judge said Scotland Yard documents were "fatally flawed". Minutes later he was rearrested and remanded in custody on an IRA membership charge.

Goldsmith rejects Archer vote wager

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

A battle of the political plutocrats was joined yesterday when Sir James Goldsmith, the billionaire leader of the anti-European Union Referendum Party, refused a bet with Jeffrey Archer, a millionaire Tory peer, on how many votes he will get at the next election.

Lord Archer offered to pay him £10 for every vote Referendum Party candidates obtained in excess of the 10 per cent required to save their deposits. In return, Sir James would have to cough up £10 for every vote by which his candidates fell short of this target.

Sir James dismissed the challenge as a "publicity gimmick" and said: "There are certain things that are important that you don't gamble about."

Lord Archer said: "By not taking my bet we know he ac-

knowledges he's not going to save his deposits." And he repeated his appeal to "an old friend, a man of great charisma and ability" to realise that he was making a very serious mistake which could hand the next election to Labour.

Sir James is prepared to spend £20m to contest seats where no candidate with a winning chance backs a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

He confirmed on BBC's *Breakfast With Frost* that he will go ahead despite the Government's decision to promise a referendum should it decide to enter a single European currency. "Even if Britain wants to opt out of the single currency, it is still committed under the Treaty of Maastricht to running its economy to the benefit of the Community as a whole. That means that it has lost its independence in running its eco-

nomics," he said. Lord Archer, the former Tory party vice-chairman, issued his challenge at a meeting in Hardwick, Cambridgeshire, on Saturday, after an anti-EU candidate in the Staffordshire South East by-election won 1,272 votes - more than 10 per cent of the Tory party's total. The Referendum Party did not stand, but the UK Independence Party came fourth - well ahead of the usual fringe candidates.

Lord Archer said the danger was that anti-EU parties would provide an alternative home for disillusioned Tories. "There are some people who under no circumstances can vote Labour," he said. "We must not treat Sir James lightly because that is what George Bush did with Perot."

However, Norman Lamont, the former Chancellor, said yesterday on Sky TV that he was "very impressed" with what Sir James has said recently.

Short revives tax row

FROM PAGE 1

She went on: "We'll get tax down by getting unemployment down... and then over time, year on year, we'll make it fairer so that people who can afford to pay a bit more will and people who are on low incomes... will pay less."

Her comments contradicted Mr Blair's speech last week to an American business audience, when he said it was surprising that people who were "hardly rich" paid the top rate of income tax, which applies above about £30,000 a year.

This was the third time Ms Short has spoken from the party's heart rather than the leader's hymn sheet in recent Sunday interviews (her comments on cannabis and Harriet Harman's selective school also embarrassed Mr Blair),

and she was forced to issue an immediate "clarification".

She said it would be "pure mischief" to suggest her comments would mean tax increases for middle-income families: "The vast majority of middle-income families have been hammered by Tory tax rises. The Labour Party has no intention of adding to their tax bills."

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said that Labour could never be the party of low taxation: "Clare Short has just confirmed that today and every family in the land should know that if there were to be a Labour government they would pay higher taxes as a result."

Labour sources said her interview was "wholly supportive" of Mr Blair, and that "there was only one infelicitous sentence". Meanwhile, Mr Hattersley,

describing himself as the "new left" within the party, launched an assault on "new" Labour. "I share Tony Blair's view that anyone who wants to return to the policies of 1983 needs psychiatric examination. But, unlike him, I was against the policies of 1983 in 1983," he said in an article in yesterday's *Observer*, referring to Mr Blair's membership of CND from 1982 to 1986.

Mr Bickerstaffe, who recently took over as general secretary of the country's biggest union, warned against the move to the centre on the eve of the Scottish TUC conference in Edinburgh: "In reaching over to the centre, to middle Britain, it shouldn't be done at the expense of the disadvantaged, the sick, the pensioners and the dying."

IN BRIEF

Man charged with twins' murders

A 37-year-old man is to appear in court today charged with the murders of twin brothers found in a London canal with head injuries. David Dillon, of Islington, north London, will appear before Highbury Corner magistrates.

The body of Christopher Langford, 38, was discovered in the Regent's Canal on 26 March and his brother Anthony was found eight days later. The identical twins lived in Bromham, Wiltshire, before giving up their jobs to live rough in the capital.

'Economist' row

The Government is to decide today whether to enforce a 3pm deadline for the *Economist* magazine to return a confidential document or face High Court action. The deadline was set on Friday after details of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the electricity industry were leaked in the magazine's current issue. The article's author, Adam Raphael, said the document would not be returned.

War crimes decision

The decision on whether an 85-year-old man should be tried in the Crown Court for alleged war crimes during the Second World War will be announced at Docketing magistrates' court today. Szymon Serafinowicz, of Binstead, Surrey, faces three charges of murder in Byelorussia between November 1941 and March 1942, when the region was under Nazi occupation. He is the first person to be prosecuted under the War Crimes Act 1991.

Hunt for gunman

Armed police wearing flak jackets were patrolling major routes out of Southampton in a hunt for a gunman after a man was shot in the street after an argument near the Greek Orthodox church in the city centre. Police found a number of large calibre cartridges and items of clothing in the street, but the assailant, wearing a blue jacket, fled on foot and police believed he still had the gun. The injured man, 25, was taken to Southampton General Hospital where his injuries were described as "not life threatening".

Women in jail

Penal reform campaigners expressed outrage at new figures showing a 57 per cent rise in the number of women in prison. A survey by the Penal Affairs Consortium showed that the number of women in jail rose from 1,353 at the end of 1992 to 2,125 by December last year, twice the rate for men. Frances Crook, director of the Howard League for Penal Reform, demanded a return to "humanity and common sense" to keep women out of prison.

Rail safety fears

A secret postal ballot of Railtrack managers conducted by the white-collar union the Transport Salaried Staff Association found that fears about safety have prompted the majority of Railtrack's managers to oppose the company's sell-off. In replies from 559 managers, 82.3 per cent of middle managers and 51.3 per cent of senior managers said it should not be sold.

Explosive trophy

Army explosives experts were called in to defuse a Second World War bomb which William Gibbens, 13, of Churchdown, Gloucestershire found on a piece of rough ground and took home to show his father.

Soldiers at ease

A £30m refurbishment of the 90-year-old barracks at Tidworth Garrison, Wiltshire, will get rid of the traditional Army dormitories and mess canteens. Instead, the soldiers will have centrally heated, double-glazed six-person flats and restaurant-style dining areas with services.

Lottery jackpot

Three tickets shared the £11.4m jackpot in Saturday's National Lottery draw. The winning numbers were 23, 38, 40, 44, 47 and 49, and the bonus was 12.

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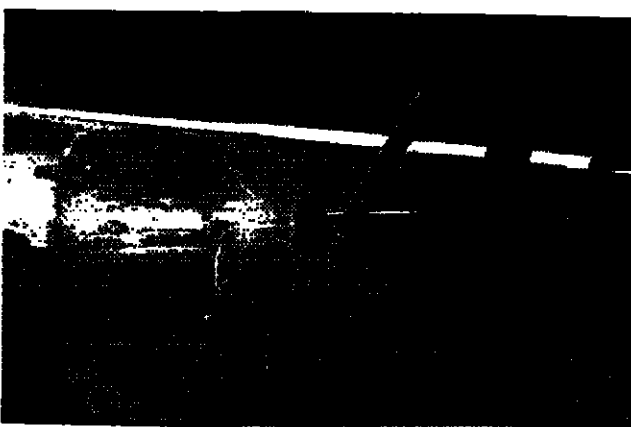
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Child sex abuse victims 'were not believed'

GLENDIA COOPER

Children who had the courage to speak out about sexual abuse were not believed according to a study by a children's charity.

Almost half had said they had spoken out about being sexually abused when they were children and some talked to more than one adult in their efforts to be believed and have the abuse stopped. But only just over one-third of those who spoke out said they were listened to.

NCH Action For Children interviewed more than 100 adult survivors of child sexual abuse, who are mainly now in their mid-30s. For the majority of victims the abuse began at about the age of four and often continued for years. In two-thirds of cases the abuse continued for at least five years and for a quarter it lasted 10 years.

Most had only been abused by one person. The abuser was a stranger in only 7 per cent of the cases. Four out of ten said the abuser was their father, step-father or mother's partner. Family friends, lodgers, neighbours accounted for 17 per cent, with the rest being a

brother or sister of the victim, or another relative.

One participant recalled: "I tried to tell and was told I was dreaming so I couldn't say what had happened and I was terrified and all I could do was cry and cry and cry."

The report reveals that nine out of ten people interviewed said relationships with their partners in their adult lives had been affected. Almost three-quarters had suffered health problems including depression or breakdown. And more than half had suffered other effects as a result of abuse, including eating disorders and alcoholism.

Another victim commented: "It has wrecked my whole life. I am unable to go to college, work, eat, wash, function normally." The symptoms that those who had suffered abuse are similar to those found in post traumatic stress disorder - flashbacks, nightmares, disturbed sleep and feelings of emptiness and numbness.

In the study, the overwhelming majority (92 per cent) never forgot they had been sexually abused. Those who reported total or partial memory loss said

they believed specific trigger events - usually death, the birth of their children or divorce - had been responsible for them recovering memories of abuse.

"Our report demonstrates the devastating effect of not disclosing sex abuse in childhood or not being believed," said Tom White, the charity's chief executive. "Yet our work also shows how it is becoming increasingly difficult for children to make themselves heard and prompt the necessary action to protect them. The adversarial nature of the court system, and examples of children's evidence being discredited, along with the current climate of disbelief in children's disclosures, have all contributed to children going unheard."

The charity is calling for reform of legal procedures to offer child witnesses better protection and minimise delays in cases going to court. It also wants national statistics of child abuse prosecutions and convictions to be collated, a coherent international child protection strategy and measures to prevent convicted abusers from abroad coming to Britain.

Action promised on report

ROGER DOBSON

William Hague, the Secretary of State for Wales, will meet senior advisers over the next two days to decide what action to take over the handling of a report on abuse at children's homes in Cwyl.

Mr Hague said yesterday that some action would be taken by the Welsh Office this week as concern grows over the handling of a report by three child-care specialists who called for an urgent judicial and public inquiry. So far their advice has not been acted upon, and Cwyl county council, which commissioned the report, has decided not to publish it.

Mr Hague said yesterday: "I will be having meetings over the next couple of days. It is obviously an issue of concern to me."

The two key issues facing him are whether or not to publish the report of a two-year investigation into abuse at homes and whether to accept the advice that there should be an inquiry. Support for an inquiry has come from victims of abuse, former staff at the homes and opposition MPs in Wales.

There has been widespread pressure for the report itself to be published. In its 300 pages, John Jillings, former director of social services in Derbyshire, Jane Tunstall, professor of social work at Keele University, and

child-care specialist Gerrilyn Smith made more than 50 recommendations. They conclude: "It is clear that in a significant number of cases the lives of young people who have been through the care system in Cwyl have been severely disrupted and disturbed... We regard it as imperative that they are addressed in the full view of public scrutiny."

Mr Hague will also face a series of questions in the commons this week from Rhodri Morgan, MP for Cardiff West and Labour's spokesman on health in Wales. He wants full exposure of the abuse in Cwyl, which is thought to have involved as many as 200 children.

Female fiction: Books shortlisted for women-only award are dominated by men



Marianne Wiggins: Book is written from man's viewpoint

Photograph: Nils Jorgensen



Word perfect: Helen Dunmore (left) and Amy Tan have both been shortlisted for the inaugural Orange prize

Rushdie's novel idea may win ex-wife a prize

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Two of the six books shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction, the new women-only novel award which carries the most valuable literary prize, are written from a man's viewpoint.

Julia Blackburn's *The Book of Colour* is written from the point of view of her father and grandfather, who lived on Mauritius, while Marianne Wiggins's *Evening Eden* tells of the love affair of Noah John, a journalist on a New York newspaper.

The book world will wait with glee to see if Ms Wiggins wins the £30,000 award, because - in a further irony - the original suggestion for the prize came from her estranged ex-husband, Salman Rushdie.

They have had little contact since she left her husband after spending five months in hiding with him, and accused him of being self-obsessed and a coward. They divorced in 1993.

The Orange Prize is open to women of all nationalities who write in English, and two of the other three shortlisted are American: Anne Tyler for *Ladder of Years*, and Amy Tan for *The Hundred Secret Senses*.

The final places on the shortlist have been taken by Helen Dunmore for *A Spell of Water* and Pagan Kennedy for her first novel *Spinsters*.

The Orange Prize has attracted controversy since it was

announced in January, with accusations of sexism and ghettoism fuelled by its value; it is worth £10,000 more than the Booker and £9,000 more than the Whitbread award.

Kate Mosse, chairwoman of the judges, said at the launch that the prize had been partly inspired by the Booker's 1991 shortlist when all six authors - including Martin Amis, Ben Okri and Roddy Doyle - were men.

"Just imagine what people would say if Booker released a shortlist with only women. Everyone would see it as an enormous political statement," Ms Mosse said then.

"We're not complaining, stamping our feet and saying, 'This isn't fair'. But whether from taste, tradition or expectation most women don't find their way on to shortlists and even fewer actually win."

AS Byatt, herself a Booker winner, has said that the reason few women have won is because they have not in general been as good as men.

The longest list for the Orange Prize, leaked to the *Bookseller* this week, yields an interesting selection of writers who did not make the shortlist. They include Pat Barker, who won the Booker last year for *The Ghost Road*, a book about a typically male subject, war, and with a cast of largely male characters.

The first Orange Prize will be awarded on 15 May.

Polly Toynbee, page 15

Pill safety scare 'led to panic and 800 extra abortions'

LOUISE JURY

More than 800 extra abortions were carried out by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in the wake of last year's scare over the safety of some contraceptive pills, new figures show today.

The increase appears to confirm fears expressed at the time that hundreds of unwanted pregnancies would follow the panic surrounding October's announcement on the risk of blood clots. The BPAS says pregnancies might have been avoided if more comprehensive information had been available. It criticises the handling of the affair.

The 9.5 per cent increase in the number of terminations between December last year and

February was recorded at 28 of the BPAS charity's clinics.

It reinforces findings from a Press Association news agency survey of doctors last week and an investigation by BBC's *Watchdog* HealthCheck programme to be broadcast tonight. Eight out of 10 authorities questioned by *Watchdog* reported a rise. The lowest was 5 per cent in Milton Keynes, but Bristol saw a 100 per cent increase. One showed a 2 per cent decrease and another no change.

Many doctors were caught off guard when the Committee on the Safety of Medicines made the shock announcement that 1.5 million women on some of the most popular modern pills were twice as likely to suffer

from deep vein thrombosis. Surgeries were besieged with call but had not, in many cases, been informed of the announcement themselves. The lack of information compounded the panic. The seven brands involved were Femodene, Femodene ED, Minulet, Triadene, Tri-minulet, Marvelon and Mercilon. Women were urged to keep taking them until the end of their cycle and then talk to their doctor, but many ignored the advice.

The BPAS, which carries out 18 per cent of abortions in England and Wales, said 41 per cent of women stopped taking the pill immediately and 61 per cent did not finish their course as a result of the scare, one of the worst in the contraceptive's 30-year history. In its report published today, it said:

"There seems to have been a lost opportunity in this announcement - women made immediate decisions and as a result there is an increase in unplanned pregnancies. With more comprehensive information and a more educated means of communication, women are better prepared to make an informed decision."

"Perhaps this would have ensured that women were more able to determine the overall risk factors against benefits and take less immediate and drastic action such as stopping any means of contraception or changing to a contraceptive that has a greater risk of pregnancy than the pill."

End of the traffic jam is nigh

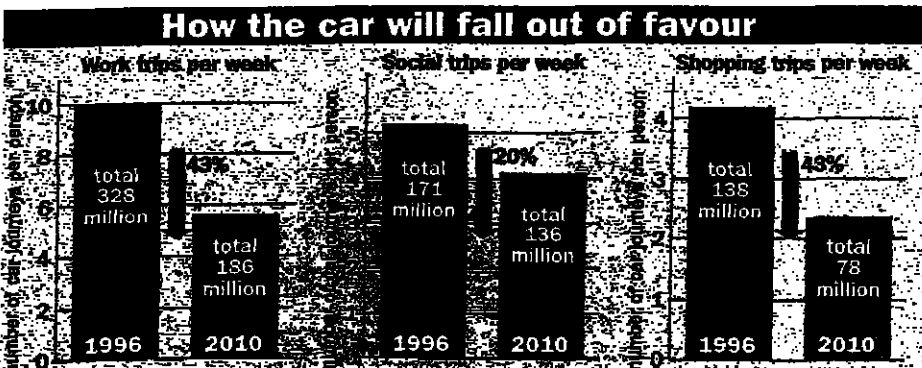
ROS WYNNE-JONES

Britain's roads could be far less congested in 15 years' time as the information superhighway supplies more of our needs. Drivers will abandon cars for two in five journeys by 2010, a report released today predicts.

The study, *Travel and the Superhighway*, forecasts that in 15 years car journeys made by commuters and shoppers will drop by 43 per cent and drivers will use their cars 20 per cent less for socialising. The 19.1 car journeys today's drivers make weekly will drop to 12.1 with the others becoming "virtual journeys" by computer.

"We will work remotely, from home, see our friends and family in their living rooms, but on surround-sound wide-screen television, not in person; shop for groceries by punching codes into our PC [personal computer]," the report says.

The study, compiled for the Autoglass company from information provided by organisations including the Henley Centre, British Telecom and the Information Superhighway Institute of Directors, also predicts a future for computerised vehicles. "Cars will be more intelligent than their drivers", it



says, adding that roadside transmitters would enforce free-flowing safer driving.

Noel Hodson, of the consultants Strategic Workstyles 2000, said one in four jobs could be done by teleworkers. He envisages "telelearning" ending parents jamming roads by taking children to school and "interactive distance learning" for university students. Commuters could stay at home and use videophone conferencing. "Teleworking would cut commuter traffic," he said.

The British Roads Federation, which has predicted that 2000 will be the Year of National Gridlock because of lack of investment in Britain's infra-


structure, is less enthusiastic. Spokesman Mark Glover said: "Advances in the information superhighway are clearly going to impact on transport, but people will still need cars. There remains a need for goods to be delivered and for people to visit each other either for work or socialising which is a face-to-face activity." He added that the report envisages a "horrible, cold, isolating future" and fails to take account of human nature.

Mr Hodson said goods could be delivered by pipeline, pointing to Mars, the confectionery company, which has built a pipeline in the United States to deliver goods via capsules deep underground. "Oxford County

Council is considering a similar idea," he said.

British Telecom forecasts there will be 3.3 million teleworkers in 2000, with one worker in six using the home as an office. The company's research suggests that a medium-sized central London firm with 100 teleworkers could save £2m a year in transport and office costs. A spokeswoman for the Department of the Environment, due to publish a document on the Great Transport Debate initiated by the Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, more than a year ago, said the Government would be studying the report with interest.

Letters, page 14



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ROMFORD 01708 753348
SOUTHAMPTON 01703 211433
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news

Sweet smell of success in the fight for survival

Heritage of the wild:
Survey shows how
the otter, one of
Britain's most popular
creatures, is pushing
aside the mink

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

The otter is storming back into England, according to an exhaustive survey to be published next month. And in making its comeback it is slowly pushing out the much-loathed mink, a pest species introduced from North America.

Britain's most popular wild animal is now found throughout England and on parts of every river catchment. The number of sites where its spraints – droppings – are found has quadrupled in 14 years.

Welsh and Scottish surveys show the otter is thriving there too, but it was in England that the fish-eating mammal suffered its greatest decline, which is why it appears on a list of 116 endangered animal and plant species which are having rescue plans designed for them. The main causes of the otter's decline were hunting with hounds and poisoning by pesticides. By the mid-Sixties it had vanished from most of the country.

The survey, organised by the Vincent Wildlife Trust, took field biologist Rob Strachan two-and-a-half years. He walked along 1,200 miles of rivers and streams in England, visiting 3,188 sites in all checking 600 metres of bank at each. He was searching for, and sniffing, their droppings. The only easy way of distinguishing them from the foul-smelling mink spraints is to use one's nose. "It's like jasmine tea and new mown hay, a sweet smell with just a touch of fish," he said.

Droppings are the only reliable, easily detectable sign of the elusive mammal's presence and they are a good indicator of their population density, whereas "mink spraints smell quite different – foul and pungent".

The strongly territorial otters often deposit spraints in prominent places, such as flat round stones projecting from the water, to make their presence clear. They also build little mud or sand heaps and leave droppings on top. The females are thought to employ spraints to signal their readiness to mate.

Otter surveys in England, Scotland and Wales have been run by the Vincent Wildlife Trust, a wildlife conservation charity founded 20 years ago by Vincent Weir, a businessman. This was the trust's first English survey; two previous ones were carried out by the Government's Nature Conservancy Council in the late-Seventies and the mid-Eighties. For all three surveys the country was divided into 50-kilometre (31-



Storming back: Four otters relax on a grassy river bank, boosting numbers in England, where they were once in decline Photograph: Reinhard Siegel

miles) squares, with the same stretches of riverbank in half of these squares examined during each study.

In the first, otter spraints were found at 6 per cent of sites. That rose to nearly 10 per cent in the second, and 23 per cent in the latest survey. In the Seventies, no otter signs were found in 11 of the 32 large squares, but now they are present in every one.

But the report points out that in the Midlands, central-southern and south-eastern England otter numbers are still very low, running into dozens rather than hundreds. The total United Kingdom population is estimated at about 7,500, with up to 1,000 of those living on Shetland where they feed in the sea as well as in rivers.

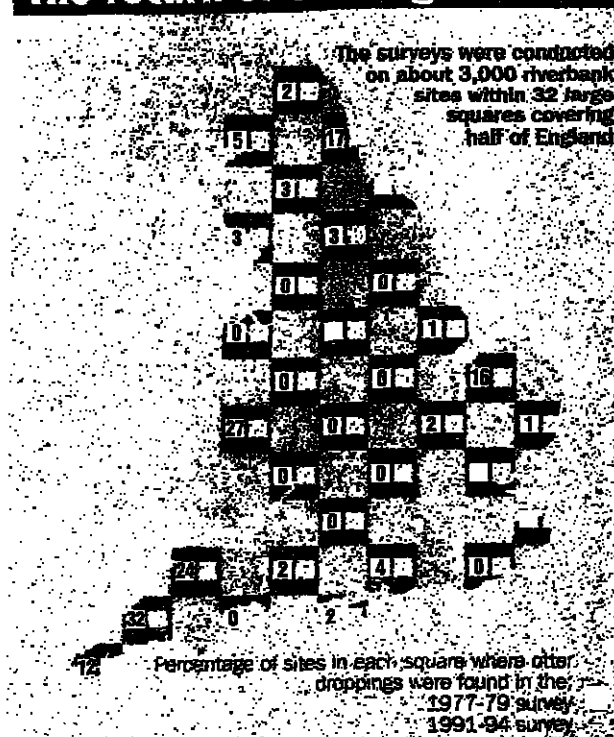
As a top carnivore with a restricted habitat, Britain's otter population probably never amounted to more than a few tens of thousands. Its decline began in earnest in the 1830s with the invention of the gin trap and more efficient rifles and the growth of gamekeeping.

There was a short-lived otter recovery during the First World War, but then otter hunting with hounds became popular. The final, most rapid decline began in the Fifties with the widespread use of pesticides which either killed the otters or rendered them infertile.

Recovery began as soon as the persecution and poisoning ended. The survey report says the release of 80 captive-bred otters into the wild in East Anglia, southern England and North Yorkshire has played an important part in re-establishing the animal in these areas.

Decline and Recovery of the Otter in England, by Rob Strachan and Don Jefferies, available at the end of May from the Vincent Wildlife Trust, 10 Lovat Lane, London EC3R 8DT; £8.

The return of the English otter



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6
news

Dozens confess after son's 'mercy killing'



The son: Derek Rowbottom

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

A man who admitted helping his cancer-stricken mother to die has received "dozens" of calls from people who claim to have carried out mercy killings on their own relatives.

Derek Rowbottom, who was interviewed by police on Saturday, said the calls included two from a man and woman who are prepared to confess publicly if he is charged.

Mr Rowbottom, 44, helped his mother, Alice, 80, to die last

Wednesday by twice pressing a diamorphine booster on a pump at her bedside. She had been in Manchester General Hospital suffering from liver cancer and was in extreme pain, unable to eat, drink or move without further distress.

Unable to bear her suffering, Mr Rowbottom said that he noticed the button on the pump and decided to administer an overdose. "I just pressed it until the syringe was empty. Then I said to one of the nurses: 'There's something wrong with this pump,' and they gave her another

one and I did the same again."

Since his admission, made after a nurse saw him giving the second morphine dose, he says he has been inundated with calls of support.

"I seem to have opened something of a Pandora's box," he said before being interviewed by police. "I have had literally dozens of calls from people who say they have done the same thing because they simply could not bear to see their loved ones in so much pain."

"There was one man who said he gave his grandfather an

overdose of pills in 1968 because he was in a terminal condition and in pain. And there was a young woman who said that she and her three brothers did exactly the same as I did with their mother. She was being treated for cancer at home, but was in agony. They pressed the diamorphine booster and allowed her to die with dignity."

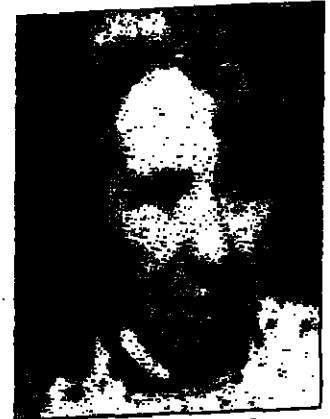
"Both of these people have told me that if I am charged, they will step forward and say to the police: 'You had better take me too'. And I don't believe they will be the only ones.

I think there are a lot of people out there who feel they did the right thing and don't want to keep quiet about it any more.

"There needs to be a change in the law that allows people who are terminally ill and in terrible pain to die with dignity. It seems as though a lot of people have done this, but haven't had the courage to admit it because of the law as it stands. Now some of them are coming forward and it will be interesting to see what happens to us."

"I don't feel I have done anything wrong. I was beside myself and just wanted my mother to be at rest. I don't care about the consequences. I am just happy that she is now at peace and free from pain."

Mr Rowbottom, whose wife and two grown-up sons support his action, was interviewed by police at Collyhurst police station, outside Manchester, on Saturday and later released. "I gave them a taped interview and I have got to go back in six weeks to find out the outcome after the coroner's inquest," he said. Greater Manchester police refused to comment.



The mother: Alice, 80



Reunited: Dorothy Goodwin recovers her flute, which was among stolen property displayed at the Metropolitan Police roadshow Photograph: Nicholas Turpin

Roadshow hits right note for burglary victim

NICOLE VEASH

Burglary victim Dorothy Goodwin was unexpectedly reunited with her flute - a 40th birthday present from her husband - at the weekend.

She discovered the musical instrument, taken along with her wedding and engagement rings during a raid on her home in Plumstead, south-east London, on display at the largest police roadshow of stolen property.

On show at the civic centre in Bromley, south-east London, were a selection of stolen goods, valued at £40m, which

the Metropolitan Police had recovered during Operation Bumblebee, its campaign to crackdown on burglary in the capital.

Mrs Goodwin, 43, said the flute was "the first thing I saw when I came in. It was a sentimental item and I am just totally stunned to recover it. I just hope they have my wedding and engagement rings here as well".

Among other items on show were an antique Chinese bowl worth £20,000, a horse-drawn carriage worth £8,000, 15 motor cycles and two items of antique furniture worth £7,000

stolen from a museum at Hastings in East Sussex.

Sergeant Geoff Boycott, who is in charge of the roadshow, said: "If more people took photographs of their property there would be less need for roadshows like this one because stolen property could be identified more quickly."

Although most forces run anti-burglary campaigns, only the Metropolitan Police, Avon and Somerset, Norfolk and Interpol use a computerised imaging system where photographs of stolen items are logged for comparison with pictures of

property recovered by police.

Sheenagh and Victor Southin, from Bromley, who lost property worth more than £10,000 when they were burgled three days after Christmas, were overjoyed to find some of their treasures at the roadshow.

Mrs Southin, who recovered three watches - one of which had been in the family for two generations - and some gold jewellery, said: "They found all this stuff in the River Cray which was just amazing. What I want now is for the police to put a face to the person who came in our bungalow."

With 1,750 people through the doors on Saturday alone, Operation Bumblebee, which has been running for nine months, is being hailed as a success. Rosalind Judd, 43, from Sydenham, south-east London, said: "I think I might have found my gold bracelet which was stolen about three years ago."

Sgt Boycott said: "We have seen a 16 per cent fall in the number of burglaries since the introduction of Bumblebee, but things would be a lot better if people marked their property with post codes or installed extra locks and burglar alarms."

British Psychological Society: Hedonistic urges of the Eighties boom give way to a more sedate lifestyle

Simple pleasures of the modern age

LIZ HUNT
Medical Editor

The hedonistic urges and over-consumption of the 1980s boom are consigned to history, and people of all ages now find gratification in the simple pleasures that life has to offer, psychologists said yesterday.

Solitude, listening to music, or the opportunity to curl up with a good book, are among the most desired pleasures, with most people eschewing drugs, drinking, and smoking. Love and sex are highly prized but affection, cosiness, and the joy of "a nice cuddle" feature more frequently than erotic romps or pornographic literature in a survey of almost 400 people who were asked to detail their pleasures.

There were some bizarre pleasures listed, including a respondent who described how he enjoyed squeezing black-

heads. Another took particular delight in the smell of summer rain on hot tarmac, while one man said he got pleasure from being miserable.

A romantic, but hardly soul, described how "making love in a snowy wood by moonlight" was high on his list of pleasures. One woman said that childbirth and the sensation of a warm, damp, child on her thigh was a source of great pleasure.

Dr Geoff Lowe, a lecturer in psychology at Hull University, said: "You might think that sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll are the bees knees, but for most people it is the simple, ordinary pleasures that are important."

Speaking on the final day of the British Psychological Society's annual conference in Brighton yesterday, Dr Lowe said he was "fascinated by the wide range of things that people took pleasure in - the number of simple bodily pleasures

that featured, a massage, having a bath, a swim, the feeling of water on the body".

Eating and drinking were mentioned frequently, and there were some examples of self-indulgence and hedonism but "no evidence that people were hell-bent on pleasure-seeking". Having time to oneself was a recurring pleasure for both sexes, he added, and for the over-40s spending time with their families was important.

Younger people took more pleasure in sport and exercise. The enjoyment of nature and beautiful scenery appealed to all sexes and age groups.

The least frequently mentioned pleasures for both men and women included smoking, art (particularly among the under-40s) and humour.

Dr Lowe and his team analysed the reports of 387 contributors to the Mass Observation Archive at Sussex University, an ongoing project in which people from a variety of backgrounds, occupations, and locations, are regularly invited to write anonymously on a range of subjects.

He said: "As psychologists, we focus on the darker side of life, the stresses and strains, but it doesn't do any harm to look at the lighter things. We got a lot of pleasure from it. You want to the people who are writing about their pleasures in heart-felt and honest terms... We should not be made to feel guilty about our pleasures."

Pleasures across the sex divide

What men like best:
Food and drink
Music & reading
Family & children

What women like best:
Family and children
Food and drink
Nature and scenery
Entertainment and reading

What men like more than women:
Achievements
Driving
Humour
Health
Love & sex
Memories
Sport and exercise

What women like more than men:
Cosiness
Friends
Home and garden
Shopping
Special occasions
Spirituality and religion

'Debts' to partner bring on post-natal depression

Women who benefit from good physical and emotional support from their partners throughout pregnancy and labour are at greater risk of post-natal depression, according to new research, writes Liz Hunt.

Psychologists say women are left with feelings of guilt at involving their partners in what is essentially a female rite of passage, and this may accelerate the onset of symptoms of depression.

They found that a midwife is more value to women than a caring partner, acting as a protective "buffer" against women developing depression in the aftermath of pregnancy.

Sandra Wheatley, a research assistant at the academic department of psychiatry at Leicester General Hospital, said the findings "flew in the face of fashion" which now dictates an active role for the male throughout his partner's pregnancy.

Ms Wheatley told the conference that "some women may feel they have accumulated too many 'caring debts' from their partner during pregnancy, which leave them with feelings

of uselessness and increase the rate of development of depressive symptoms".

Post-natal depression is probably caused by a combination of hormonal changes and various psychological and environmental factors.

It can range from a short-lived episode to a severe psychosis in which the woman may need to be hospitalised to prevent her harming herself or the baby.

An estimated two-thirds of women suffer the "blues" which start four or five days after the birth, and last for a week or two. They will feel discouraged, irritable, miserable, and prone to tears.

There is often a sense of anti-climax or an overwhelming feeling of responsibility. In up to 15 per cent of women the depression is more marked and can last for weeks, with symptoms of tiredness, sleeping problems, loss of appetite, and restlessness.

A group of 48 women took part in the Leicester study, completing questionnaires after 34 weeks of pregnancy and again 10-14 days after giving birth. The study concluded that good midwifery care is vital for both the physical and mental health of pregnant women.

An introduction to APHRODISIACS
Free Report

Since the beginning of time, man has searched for the potion, drug or food that will enable him to increase or maintain his sexual potency. This new report explores Aphrodisiacs, takes a look at those traditionally supposed to work and details the principal drugs and other treatments currently used in the treatment of erectile dysfunction. Copies of this new report are available FREE from Canell plc, Alresford, nr Colchester, Essex CO7 8AP £2 towards the costs of printing, postage and handling would be appreciated.

DAILY POEM

Milestone

By George Mackay Brown

How many miles to the kirk of Magnus?
Fifteen

And to the circle of Brodgar stones?
Four

And to the sea valley of Hoy?
Six

As the seagull flies

And to the village where the Irish soldier
Built his inn? ... Seven

How many miles to that other place, the Inn of Night?
Ask a blank stone in the kirkyard

The mile stone
Has opened a wise mouth a many a year
To horseman and traveller

How many miles to the lost children?
The stone

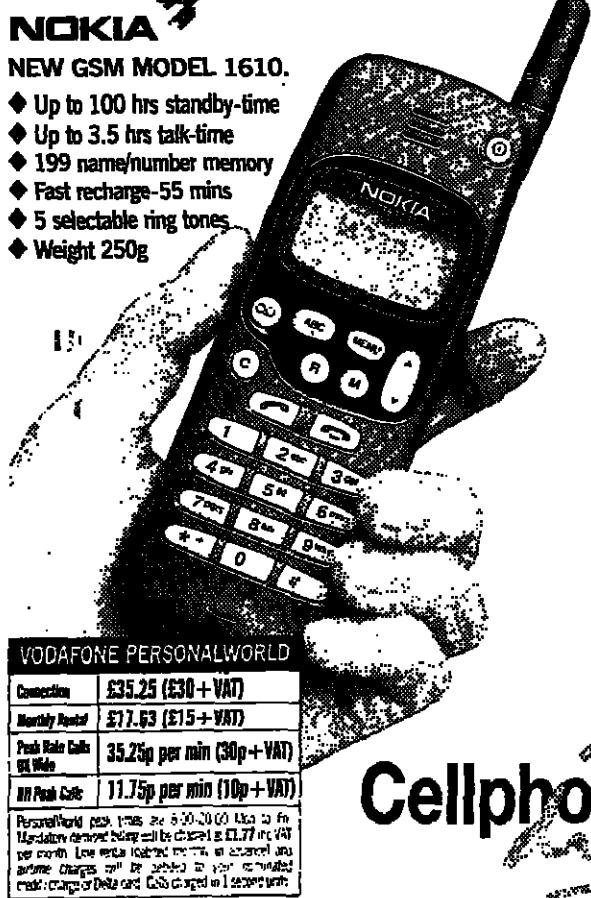
Cries in the daffodil surge, with spindrift of dew

With the death of George Mackay Brown on Saturday, Scotland lost its finest lyric poet of the century. He was an Orkadian, born, brought up and wedded to this mysterious clutch of islands off the north east tip of the mainland. Older than the Celts, the indigenous population of the Orkneys belong like the Basques to a pre Indo-European peoples, and Mackay Brown was heir to their long tradition of story-tellers. It is the magic of this ancient Orkney that is evoked in his poems: raw and burnished landscapes, the indissoluble communion between people and the sea; the powerful presence of the supernatural. This poem is taken from *The Wreck of the Arcturion* (John Murray). His last collection, *Following A Lark*, will be published next month.

Obituary, page 16

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8 ***
news

Challenge for the councils: Almost 3,000 seats up for grabs in polls which will offer vital clues to outcome of general election

Tories facing wipe-out in the town halls

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

The three main political parties launch their campaigns this week for next month's local elections in a contest whose results will be pored over as predictors for the next general election.

The contest – the smallest in the four-yearly local election cycle – is unlikely to produce dramatic changes of control, but is likely to see Labour and the Liberal Democrats gain control of hung councils whose numbers have risen sharply in the wake of years of declining Conservative fortunes.

The Conservatives are defending just four local authorities where they have outright control, all of which, including the Prime Minister's Huntingdon, they stand to lose if last week's 'lameworth' by-election swing is replicated on 2 May.

The Liberal Democrats are confident of underlining their position as the second party in local government, pushing the Conservatives further into third place, while Labour will be keeping a close eye on contests in Basildon, Peterborough, Milton Keynes, Oldham and Rochdale, all of which contain marginal parliamentary seats which Labour will want to claim

at the general election. The Conservatives' traditional campaign message – "Tory councils cost you less" – will be harder for them to carry now they control a mere 15 of the 400 English local authorities after the débâcle of last year's local elections. Labour will tell electors that "The Tories hit you where it hurts" concentrating their fire on service cuts and sharp council tax increases which Labour argues have swallowed half this month's income tax cuts.

This year just under 3,000 seats are being contested against 13,000 last year. One-third of the seats are in the 36 metropolitan authorities, one-third in 100 English districts, while all the seats are being contested in 13 new "shadow" unitary authorities which will take office next April.

Conservative hopes of proving their fortunes have turned the corner are pinned on retaining the four they still control (Huntingdon, Broxbourne, Runnymede and Macclesfield), gaining control of Bourne-

mouth and Poole while making gains in Brighton and Hove. In these three southern coastal towns all the seats are up, and the Conservatives' performance comes off their dismal showing last year, rather than against the

1992 results when most of the seats up this time were last contested. Then, immediately after the general election, the Tories had their best local election results for a decade, making seats last contested then harder to defend. Bournemouth and Poole, however, are targets for the Liberal Democrats to take outright control.

The Conservatives will also be seeking to cling to Solihull, their last remaining toehold of power in the 36 metropolitan authorities and which they control with support from independent ratepayers. A more likely result, however, is that in a string of metropolitan authorities, such as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle they will face the humiliation of seeing their last remaining councillors defeated, leaving them with no representation at all.

Labour may face difficulties in Liverpool, where the Liberal Democrats have been advancing, and in Walsall and Leicester, where furious divisions in the local parties may rebound on them. Portsmouth, which it did well to take last year, could also fall.

Labour could, however, make gains in Oldham and Rochdale if the Liberal Democrats do not perform well and has Wyre Forest, Cambridge and overall control in Trafford clearly in its sights, along with Peterborough, currently the Commons seat of Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, who has departed for safer pastures elsewhere. It might also claim Basildon, where David Amess, the sitting Conservative, has also jumped ship.

John Redwood, last year's leadership challenger, may well see his Wokingham fall to the Liberal Democrats, who stand a good chance also of taking once blue, but now hung councils, such as Tunbridge Wells, Mole Valley Southend and Havant.

Liberal Democrat success and Conservative failure in such southern seats, however, will depend crucially on whether last year's "Blair effect" of voters switching to Labour rather than the Liberal Democrats, is repeated. Finally the Conservatives in Stratford-upon-Avon could face the double humiliation of seeing the once Tory, now hung, council go to the Liberal Democrats – having already lost their MP, Alan Howarth to Labour.

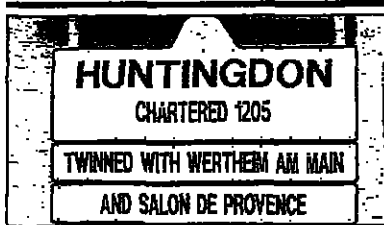


Bridge of sighs: Opposition parties believe they can dispossess Huntingdonshire's ruling Tories in the local elections

Photograph: Brian Harris

Fear abroad in Major 'homeland'

The PM has Britain's biggest Conservative majority, but even in Huntingdon his party may be vulnerable. **Will Bennett reports**



The conspiratorial-looking outline figure chosen as the logo of one of the last bastions of Conservative local government power in England is ironically that of Oliver Cromwell.

The Parliamentary leader who won the English Civil War and temporarily brought down the monarchy was born and educated in Huntingdon.

Today, the area is John Major's constituency and has the biggest Conservative majority in the country, more than 36,000. Huntingdonshire is one of just four district councils in England still run by the Conservatives and it is a measure of how low the party's fortunes have sunk that its loss is even being discussed.

The district is the fastest growing area of England with a population which has expanded from 97,000 in 1971 to 150,000 today. Its traditional agricultural base is still there, but many new light industries have arrived.

It is prosperous and is likely to become more so as its good road communications attract

investment. If the electorate here has not got the feelgood factor then the Tories are doomed.

The result of the local election on 2 May will depend on a handful of votes in just two or three wards.

Should they fall, then so will this greatest of Tory bastions and Mr Major himself may come under pressure to stand down before the general election.

The possibility of defeat is not something that Richard Turpin, Conservative leader of Huntingdonshire council is prepared to contemplate although he admits that he may be his party's only district council leader after 2 May. "I can stand being

the only one for a year because our fortunes will get better and I should not be isolated for very long", said Wing Commander Turpin, a retired RAF officer.

He believes that the Conservatives who are defending 13 of the 19 seats up for election this year can shrug off national unpopularity because of their local record.

"What we are arguing, and I think successfully, is that we have kept the increase in the district share of the council tax to within inflation, around 3 per cent, and we are improving services", he said.

Wing Cdr Turpin, whose ward includes the Majors' constituency home, also believes

that the Prime Minister's record as the local MP will help the Tories. The ward is not among the one-third of council seats up for election this year.

The main threat to the Conservatives who have 31 seats comes from the Liberal Democrats who have 12.

While the former are strongest in the rural north of the district, the latter have turned the town of St Neots in the south into a stronghold.

Although their assault on the Conservatives is complicated by a breakaway party faction which is putting up three candidates, the Liberal Democrats believe they can take three or four seats from the Tories, plus the only one held

by the splinter group. Percy Meyer, the Liberal Democrats local chairman and a councillor, said: "Depriving the Tories of control is achievable, the time is right."

"Never have the Conservatives been in such disarray." To do this they will need Labour, which has seven seats and is strongest in Huntingdon town, to do well. Robert Lomax, the Labour leader, is hoping for at least one gain.

If the two opposition parties capture their immediate target seats, the Conservatives will be left dependent on two independent councillors.

But if the rural areas revolt and provide some shock Liberal Democrat victories they and Labour will have to decide whether they can run the council jointly.

For Mr Lomax, who has spent 35 years in local politics in Huntingdon, it would be the greatest triumph of his life. It would be a moment which might also have brought a smile to the face of Oliver Cromwell.

Parties clash in England's town and country

Almost 3,000 seats are being fought in 150 authorities, along with some 50 by-elections. Labour and the Tories are both defending some 1,200 seats and the Liberal Democrats almost 450. One-third are in the 36 metropolitan authorities. Labour, defending 442, the Conservatives 268 and the Liberal Democrats 100. The Conservatives defend 748 in shire districts. Labour 397 and the Liberal Democrats 238. Thirteen new unitary authorities – Bournemouth, Brighton and Hove, Darlington, Derby, Leicester, Luton, Milton Keynes, Poole, Portsmouth, Rutland, Southampton, Stoke-on-Trent and Thamesdown – have elections for shadow authorities, with Labour defending the bulk of the seats. Scotland, Wales, London, the county councils and



two-thirds of English districts are not involved. The Conservatives seek to improve on their dire result last year. Comparison with 1992, the last time most of these seats were fought and when the Tories did well – is complicated by the new unitary authorities. Labour will seek to make comparisons with 1991, the last round before the last general election, when they were neck-and-neck with the Tories.

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'End ban' plea to EU chief who backed beef

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

Demand for an end to the ban on British beef was mounting last night after farmers and politicians reacted furiously to European Union admissions that it is perfectly safe to eat.

Franz Fischler, the EU Agriculture Commissioner administering the ban, said he "would not hesitate to eat beef in England", while one of his aides went further, saying: "If we really thought British beef was unsafe its sale would have been banned in Britain as well as everywhere else in the world."

The National Farmers' Union led calls on Mr Fischler to persuade member states to lift the ban, something Gavin Strang, Labour's agriculture spokesman, said he believed the commissioner was keen to do.

"In my own discussions with Mr Fischler, he has led me to believe he would like to see the ban lifted sooner rather than later," said Mr Strang. "His comments are not helpful at this

point, but I am pleased he shares our belief that the ban should be lifted."

The latest row flared after Mr Fischler told a reporter from Reuters news agency that beef remained his favourite meat. "I wouldn't hesitate to eat beef in England. I see no medical reason not to," he said. The ban had been imposed not in the interests of public safety, but to prevent the whole European beef market from collapsing. If British beef had not been banned, he said, no other European countries would have been able to export their beef.

His admission was greeted with anger among some MPs, who argued that Britain was being victimised economically to save the beef industries of other countries.

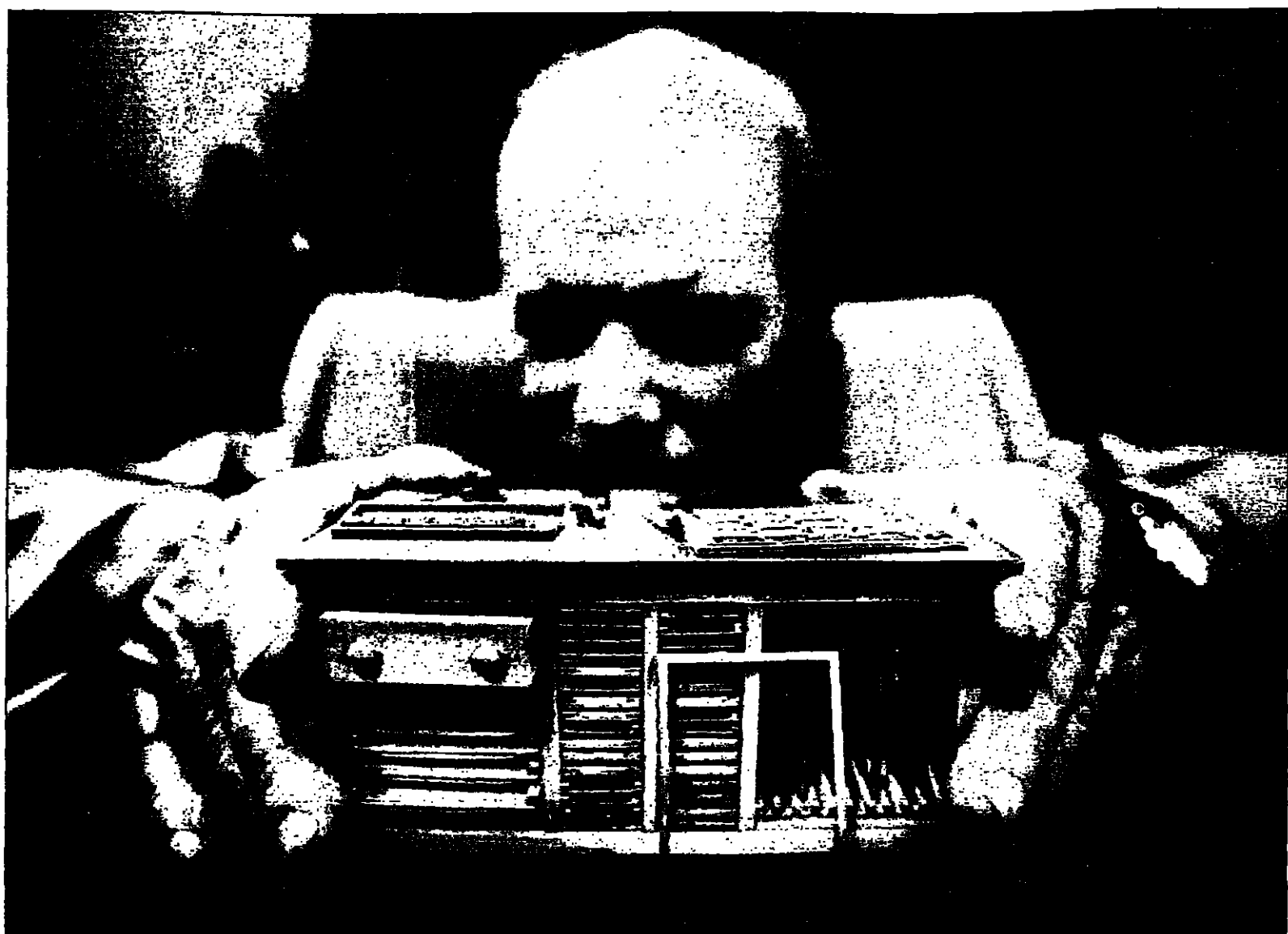
Sir Gerard Vaughan, Tory MP for Reading East, said: "This is an absolutely astonishing situation. Here is the man who has made Britain a scapegoat and is victimising the British farmer and the British taxpayer now conceding that all

this has been done just for the convenience of Europe... The situation is totally indefensible."

Trevor Hayes, spokesman for the NFU, said: "Although Mr Fischler can make proposals, the decision to impose the ban was taken by the Council of Ministers, so we would like to see him persuade the governments of the member states to see his point of view."

The International Meat Trade Association described Mr Fischler's intervention as "too little, too late". Jenny Burt, chairwoman of the association's export committee, said: "It is a pity he did not say this very publicly when the question of a ban was first raised."

The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food said Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture, would announce details of compensation for farmers and proposals to shore up the beef industry later this week. Full details of proposed cuts will not be submitted to the European Commission until the end of the month.



Small but perfect: Andy Hunter, a retired printer of Norwich, with the tiny model of a printer's stone which won him the title of Miniaturist of the Year, at Dolls House and Miniature Scene Monthly magazine's exhibition in Hove town hall, East Sussex
Photograph: Andrew Hasson

Marathon man defies the odds

RACHEL HALLIBURTON



Chris Moon: 'Aim is to finish'

A man who just over a year ago lost half his right leg and his right hand in a landmine explosion will this Sunday be trying to complete the London Marathon.

Chris Moon, 33, was maimed while supervising a de-mining project in Mozambique, but an unusually swift recovery has enabled Oxford to enter him for the race to raise money for landmine victims in the Third World.

Normally, below-the-knee amputees must wait at least 18 months to be fitted with the kind of specially adapted sprinting

mb that will enable Mr Moon to compete. But to the surprise of consultants at Queen Mary's hospital, Roehampton, their patient's progress has been so

fast that he was able to be fitted with the prosthesis Re-Flex VSP less than a year after his injury.

He is very aware that the NHS-supplied leg, which cost more than £3,000, is one of the many medical advantages he has had over Third World land-

mine victims. His own experience of medical treatment in Mozambique was a salutary indication of this.

He had to instruct the medic sent to the scene of the explosion on how to insert his drip. When the medic inserted the drip correctly, but failed to run the fluid through, Mr Moon only stopped himself from

dying from an air embolism and dehydration by pulling out the tubes. Later in hospital, a porter started cutting off the ragged flesh from his stump with a pair of scissors. "I thought with the other pain from the blast I wouldn't be able to feel it, but it actually felt like someone was cutting chunks off my leg... After that I asked the doctor not to leave me."

Mr Moon's fitness training before the accident has proved

one of his greatest assets in his preparation for the marathon, which could only start in February because his sprinting leg was not available before. It was this fitness that kept him alive after the accident when haemorrhaging and shock would have killed most people.

He is aware, however, of warning voices that his marathon attempt may be premature. Although he will not be the only amputee running, he will certainly be the least prepared, and he was advised to wait at least six months before attempting such a challenge. But he has refused to let others set standards for him, and said:

"The aim is to finish". Asked how he would react if he does not manage it, he answers: "I'd have a bottom lip like a rolled up sleeping bag for weeks."

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10 **
international

War in Lebanon: Residents told to get out or risk shells and bombs as Israel launches biggest attack since Beirut blitz of 1982

Deadline
set for
400,000
villagersPATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

The Israelis ordered 400,000 people to leave southern Lebanon by yesterday evening or face air and artillery attacks, which have already killed at least 21 and wounded 49. The exodus is the largest forced movement of people in the Middle East since the flight of the Iraqi Kurds after the Gulf war in 1991.

In the four days since Operation Grapes of Wrath started, Israel has increased the scope of the attack by stages. All people living south of the Litani river, 20 miles from the Israeli frontier, were told yesterday to leave their homes. For the first time the Palestinian refugee camp at Beddawi, outside Tripoli, in north Lebanon, was attacked by Israeli aircraft.

After a cabinet meeting yesterday Israel said it would stop its assault if it received cast-iron guarantees that Hizbollah, the Lebanese guerrilla movement, would stop firing Katyusha rockets across the Lebanese border. An Israeli woman was wounded yesterday when Hizbollah fired nine volleys of rockets.

Hizbollah says it has not lost a single fighter since the Israeli offensive started. As the skies over southern Lebanon cleared of rain, Israeli planes launched 15 raids. A helicopter hit an electricity substation at Jambour in what Israel says was retaliation for an electricity black-out caused by a Katyusha in northern Israel. Another air attack was near the Syrian border.

Syria said the US risks losing its role of mediator in the Middle East because of its support for the Israeli strikes. Syrian radio said the US position was exposing the region to "real dangers" and urged it to keep the role of the honest broker in the Middle East conflict. "The American stand is far from having the credibility which a superpower should maintain as a peace sponsor in the world."

Israeli commentators see US support for Grapes of Wrath as a vital source of political strength for Israel, enabling it to conduct prolonged military operations. On Friday the US urged Syria and Iran to curb Hizbollah attacks and defend Israel's strikes, saying Islamic radicals must feel the "consequences" of their acts.

Ehud Barak, the Israeli Foreign Minister, said the onslaught had two objectives: to strike at Hizbollah militarily and to make clear Israel expects the Lebanese government to halt the rocket attacks. He ruled out diplomatic action at this stage. In Beirut, a foreign ministry official said Syria and Lebanon backed a return by Hizbollah and Israel to an understanding, brokered by the US in 1993, barring both sides from targeting civilians.

The present offensive is more extensive than Operation Accountability in 1993, since it includes Beirut and is likely to last longer. The aim is to put intolerable pressure on Beirut to exhort President Hafez al-Assad of Syria to curb Hizbollah.

In the past the Syrian leader has resisted attempts by the US to get him to withdraw his support for Hizbollah and his alliance with Iran.

The Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik al-Hariri, said yesterday during a visit to Paris that he could not disarm Hizbollah guerrillas. He urged Israel to withdraw from the south of his country to be replaced by the Lebanese army with UN help.

Mr al-Hariri said between 300,000 and 400,000 refugees had been forced to leave their villages by Israeli attacks. "Israel asks that we disarm Hizbollah and at the same time it [Israel] occupies part of our territory... We cannot do that, it is impossible," he said.

He added that if the Israeli army pulled out of south Lebanon, the Lebanese army with the help of the UN and France could make the area safe. Leading article, page 14



Exodus: People fleeing to Beirut from their south Lebanon village yesterday as the Israelis stepped up their offensive

Photograph: Jamal Said/Reuters

Peres weighs threat from Hizbollah

Israel's military intervention in Lebanon, codenamed Grapes of Wrath, is already its biggest armed action beyond its borders since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982-84. The scale of the offensive is not immediately apparent because the attacks have escalated in stages since the first air raids four days ago.

Already 400,000 Lebanese are on the roads as refugees. Israel yesterday ordered the population in the South below the Litani river to leave by 6pm and Beirut has been attacked for the first time since 1982. Lebanese and Syrian soldiers are among the casualties. The Israeli navy is blockading the port of Beirut.

Israel said yesterday that it would stop its offensive as soon as it had strict guarantees that Hizbollah, the Lebanese guerrilla movement, would stop firing Katyusha rockets into Israel. But the very size of operation

Grapes of Wrath means the political future of Lebanon and the role of the outside powers with an interest there - Israel, Syria and Iran - has been thrown into the melting pot.

So far, all is going well for Israel. It has suffered no military casualties and only one civilian has been seriously wounded. World public opinion seems largely unmoved. Above all, the US is giving unqualified support and puts all blame on Hizbollah for provoking the attacks by firing Katyusha rockets at northern Israel.

International acquiescence may not last - particularly if there are more incidents such as the Israeli helicopter attack on a Lebanese ambulance which killed four children - but it allows Israel time to carry out a prolonged operation which may last for two weeks or more. The danger for Shimon

Peres, the Israeli prime minister, is that this is as good as it is going to get. "There was no great euphoria in the halls of the defence ministry," writes commentator Nahum Barnea of the mood in the political and military establishment. "Everyone, first and foremost Peres, is waiting for a counter-attack."

So far there has been little sign of resistance by Hizbollah. However, retaliation is bound to come and last night Hizbollah threatened to hurl dozens of suicide bombers at the United States and Israel after stepping up its Katyusha attacks on Israel with its heaviest bombardment in three years. The organisation had earlier called for its suicide bombers to assemble in the weeks before Grapes of Wrath. Hizbollah units showed great skill in infiltrating behind Israeli lines and can presumably do so again.

The Israeli operation has a number of related objectives. It is a collective punishment of the population of south Lebanon who support Hizbollah. It is unlikely, however, that it will turn them against the guerrillas since such punishments have been inflicted before, without the desired effect. Although Israel says it is destroying Hizbollah targets it is destroying drill halls and emplacements.

A second objective is to force the Lebanese government to take stronger measures against Hizbollah. To this end the economic recovery of Lebanon is being crippled. The port of Beirut and ports to the south are blockaded. Maybe Rafiq Hariri, the Lebanese prime minister, does not have much control over Hizbollah, but the Israeli government wants him to put pressure on Syria to curb the

guerrillas. The idea is that President Hafez al-Assad can be forced to agree to new rules preventing Hizbollah from firing Katyushas at Israel.

There is a third, largely unspoken, objective for Mr Peres. This is to win the election on 29 May. No Israeli government ever lost votes by waging war. For the moment the campaign in Lebanon looks well timed to redress fears in the Labour party that Mr Peres will suffer at the polls because he is seen as soft - too much the civilian diplomat - compared to Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the right-wing Likud party and his main rival.

It could all come unstuck. Israel is playing its trump cards now. Hizbollah, to retain its credibility, will have to strike back effectively. In the past it has shown it can do so. "Israel with this move is trying to

restore its aggressive image which has been tarnished in recent years," writes Alu Be in the daily *Ha'arets*. But Syria and Iran back Hizbollah and are unlikely to accept its humiliation by Israeli without a response.

Israel believes that its intelligence is better and munitions more accurate than during 1993, the last time it raided Lebanon during Operation Accountability. This may be so but few guerrilla forces have been seriously damaged by air and artillery attacks alone, as the JS learned in Vietnam.

A ground assault by the Israeli army would be dangerous. It would mean casualties, with damaging political consequences in Israel, and it would lead to a much more hostile international and Arab reaction to Grapes of Wrath.

Patrick Cockburn

Name game spells double trouble for Chirac family

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

President Jacques Chirac's first grandchild, Martin Rey-Chirac, is all of three weeks old. Already, he is making political waves. The problem is his name: not the Martin part, which conforms by its presence in the calendar of saints to everything required of a French first name, but the double-barrelled surname.

French parents are not allowed to register their children in both their surnames. They have to choose one of them, which is inscribed on the birth certificate and becomes the child's name in law. The child may add a name when he reaches the age of majority, but it will always be an addition "by custom and usage", never recognised as part of the legal name.

So was an exception made for petit Martin Rey-Chirac, a

French MP wanted to know, and he put down a written question to that effect in parliament. "Is this," asked Jean-Louis Masson, the honourable member for Moselle, only half tongue-in-cheek, "a favour exclusive to descendants of French presidents while in power, or is it a change in the law from which every citizen will be able to benefit from now on?"

Mr Masson's interest in the matter stemmed from the fact that he has spent more than a decade trying to change the law to allow a child to take both its parents' names. (He is the father of three daughters and no sons.) Suddenly, the law seemed to have been changed *de facto* by the president.

Claude Chirac, Martin's mother, is the president's younger daughter and his trusted public relations adviser. The child's father - whose identity was disclosed to the French pub-

lic only a couple of months before the birth - is Thierry Rey, who won a judo gold medal for France at the 1980 Moscow Olympics and is now a television presenter.

Although the French media referred to Claude Chirac through her pregnancy as a "thoroughly modern woman" who decided to have a child "all by herself", Mr Rey was frequently photographed with Claude and is named as the father on the birth certificate.

The answer to Mr Masson's question has now been provided. Martin, it emerges, was not made an exception after all; he was registered only under his mother's name. Until he is 18, he is for legal purposes plain Martin Chirac.

The misapprehension, it is said, derived from a French media report which said he had been "registered" with the double-barrelled name. If it had



Claude Chirac: MP's questions on son's name

simply said that he would be "known as" Martin Rey-Chirac, not an eyebrow would have been raised. Still, at least Mr Masson may benefit from all the fuss: next time he tries to have the law amended, he may get a more sympathetic reception than hitherto.

Italian politics finds a convert

Rome - What is a foreign correspondent to do when faced with the confusion of an Italian general election campaign? Laugh, cry, or panic. All those options are tempting. But Tana de Zulueta, Rome correspondent for the *Economist*, has taken what might be described as the unorthodox approach. She is actually running for office. Ms de Zulueta's smiling face has appeared on billboards in the past two weeks proclaiming her as the centre-left's candidate for the Senate in constituency number one in Rome, an area covering most of the historic centre and a broad middle-class swathe north of the Vatican.

She has gone on leave from her job to "cross the fence", as she puts it, between journalism and politics, and embarked on a whirl of campaign appointments in schools, old people's homes, hospitals, street markets and fund-raising dinners. Instead of interviewing politicians, she now goes out on the stump; and instead of asking

LOCAL
HEROES: 12
Tana de Zulueta

questions, she is answering ones put to her by other journalists.

In the old days of the British empire, such behaviour might have been branded as going native and viewed with suspicion. Journalistically, it throws open the thorny ethical question of whether she is compromising her professional career in Italy - should she ever need to return to it - now that she has openly declared her partisan interest.

But such concerns probably do not mean much either to the Italian electorate, which has seen stranger things, or to Ms de Zulueta, who has become such a familiar figure in Italy over the years that she has long been considered one of them, or almost. With an English mother and a Spanish father

who travelled the world for the World Health Organisation, Ms de Zulueta has no roots in any country except Italy where she has lived for nearly all of her adult life. Now 44, she has an Italian husband, two Italian children and, latterly, Italian nationality - which explains her qualification to stand for election.

"I always have to explain carefully who I am and why I have an accent in Italian. But that can be an advantage. At one street market a trader told me he was glad I was a foreigner because that gave me a better chance of understanding the mess the country's in," she said.

Ms de Zulueta has served as a distinguished correspondent in Italy, first for the *Sunday Times* and then for the *Economist*, for more than 20 years. In recent years, though, she has done more and more work for the Italian media, including a stint editing the television news on Videomusic, the Italian equivalent of MTV. Her entry into politics was due to Romano

Prodi, leader of the centrist alliance known as the Olive tree and an old contact of Ms de Zulueta's from his days at the head of IRI, the Italian state holding company. It was he who chose her as a candidate, and decided to field her in central Rome, a key marginal constituency.

So now she is using her considerable charm to plead for a kinder, gentler Italy, where concrete issues count for more than television flamboyance. In central Rome, her main task will be to persuade small shopkeepers that the centre-left will not tax them out of existence.

She is an unpredictable candidate in an unpredictable constituency. Friendly and almost apologetically good-humoured, she is not exactly an adoptive politician on the model of Alberto Fujimori or Sonu Gandhi. But then again she does not have much to lose. If she does fail to win, the *Economist* has promised she can have her job back.

Andrew Gumbel

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Verona summit: Fallback date of 2002 proposed but former Bundesbank chief warns of fatal blow to EMU

Single currency launch faces delay

SARAH HELM
Verona

An unexpected move by the European Commission at the weekend suggests that plans are being laid to delay the launch of the single currency until 2002.

Jacques Santer, president of the Commission, proposed at a meeting of European finance ministers in Verona, that countries which are not ready to join monetary union in 1999 should be given a new target of 2002.

It is already envisaged that 2002 should be the year when Euro notes and coins start to circulate. Given doubts about whether France and Germany will meet the current 1999 deadline for the EMU launch,

2002 could now become fixed as the most likely fallback date for all countries.

When planning for the single currency began, key figures in the Commission favoured a "big bang" approach to the single-currency launch, in which the changeover would happen at all levels of the economy and as notes and coins are introduced. The Commission has also favoured beginning monetary union in as many countries as possible at the same time.

The idea of delaying monetary union until 2002 - in order to ensure EMU is more convincing when it happens - would have a clear logic in the view of the Commission. Its officials in Verona insisted that the

new 2002 target date for late-comers should not be viewed as an attempt to prepare the ground for a possible delay. Rather, they insisted, the idea was to maintain impetus for

countries not ready to join in 1999 by giving them a new date to aim for. The Verona meeting also heard plans for Brussels to impose strict new rules and penalties, aimed at placing

pressure on countries to bring their economies into line with the Maastricht convergence criteria. This process could not be open-ended, officials insisted. Separately, Europe's finance

ministers insisted that John Major must commit Britain to join a European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) if the Prime Minister wants Britain to have a chance of joining the single currency. The ministers agreed that Britain should have been a member for two years before joining if it is to have a chance of qualifying for EMU.

The Verona meeting agreed to establish an "ERM II" for those countries which do not join the single currency at the launch. An ERM for the countries outside EMU is deemed essential to ensure a stable relationship between the so-called "ins" and "outs" and to prevent disruption of the single market. Kenneth Clarke, the Chan-

cellor, attacked suggestions that Britain must join the ERM as "judicious", saying there was "no legal basis for such a move". Until now, the question of whether ERM membership is a condition for countries wishing to qualify for EMU has been unanswered.

The Maastricht treaty states that one of the conditions for entry is: "Observance of the normal fluctuation margins provided for by the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, for at least two years." According to Mr Clarke, this does not mean obligatory membership of the ERM, but simply observance of normal fluctuation bands.

Gavin Davies, page 19

Financier warns of political crisis

A delay in launching the single European currency could undermine monetary union and cause a major political crisis, according to a senior German financier, writes Diane Coyle.

Karl-Otto Pöhl, former president of Germany's Bundesbank, tells BBC's *Panorama* programme tonight that a postponement would be the end of the plan to join Europe's cur-

rencies in a monetary union. But he adds that the economic problems facing France and Germany mean this could be inevitable.

One of the most prominent German public figures to come out against the single currency, he says: "If unemployment is rising further and the recession is getting deeper, there could be a situation where they

have no choice, where they have to accept a delay."

In an interview that will delight Britain's Euro-sceptics, Mr Pöhl argues that the European Union is a post-war concept which is now out of date. However, the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, repeats his warning that European unity is the only way to avoid another war.

Nato chief tours states fighting to join alliance

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Central Europe Correspondent

The Secretary-General of Nato, Javier Solana, sets off today on a 12-nation tour of Central and Eastern Europe in which he will experience at first hand the intense rivalry in the region over the race to join the alliance.

From Estonia on the Baltic to Romania on the Black Sea, Mr Solana will be fitted as the man holding the key to his hosts' wildest desires and, like a judge at a beauty contest, will be asked to reflect on their respective merits and charms.

To general delight, Mr Solana will declare that, despite fierce objections from Russia, Nato enlargement will go ahead and that Moscow will not be able to dictate its terms.

To the consternation of some, however, he will also point out that not all Nato applicants will be joining the alliance at the same time - if at all - and that, in effect, there are likely to be several waves of new entrants.

"The Secretary-General will be making it clear that no decisions have been taken yet and that each applicant will be judged on individual merit," said a Nato official.

"But it is clear that some countries are more ready to join than others and, obviously, they will be the first to join."

Although Nato has not yet specified formal criteria for admitting members from the former Warsaw Pact, it is no secret that countries judged to have made the most progress in democratic and economic reforms will be favoured, as will those which have been seen participating in Nato's Partnership for Peace programme and contributed to the 60,000 Nato-led peace-keeping force currently in Bosnia.

Nato member-states are also keen that future members have established clear civilian control over their armed forces and have no serious disputes with neighbours. Of the 11 former Communist countries that have so far signalled an interest to join, the Central European trio of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, the economic leaders of the region, are considered the clear front-runners.

While not ruled out of the first wave, the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia is considered the next strongest candidate, with Slovakia, Romania

and maybe even Albania seen as fellow contenders for second and third waves of expansion.

The picture in Bulgaria is muddled by the fact the country, traditionally one of Moscow's staunchest allies, cannot make its mind up about whether it wants to join.

In the Baltic states, moreover, geography (common borders with Russia), history (forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union) and ethnic make-up (large ethnic Russian populations in Latvia and Estonia), make it unlikely that Nato would wish to take them on board for the foreseeable future.

As one Western diplomat in Central Europe put it: "There is an in-tray, a pending-tray and a 'too difficult to handle' tray. The Baltic states are in the latter."

According to Nato officials, the phased expansion of the alliance should spread stability within the region and prod countries seen to be lagging behind in democratic and economic reforms into a faster pace of change.

In the case of Hungary, which at one point seemed to be slipping behind Poland and the Czech Republic, the fear of being left behind in the race for Nato and the European Union prompted a dramatic acceleration of the reform process last year and a stepping up of attempts to conclude bilateral treaties with neighbouring Slovakia and Romania.

In other countries of the region, however, the prospect of seeing regional rivals leaping ahead has aroused a mixture of dread and envy. In a statement last week, Gheorghe Tinca, the Romanian Defence Minister, said if Hungary was admitted to Nato ahead of Romania, it would be "detrimental to the region's balance and could even lead to an arms race".

Most Central European and Western diplomats joined Hungary in dismissing the substance of Mr Tinca's remarks, putting them down to a case of sour grapes on the part of Bucharest and an expression of an exaggerated fear that, once in Nato, Hungary might try to close the door to any further new members from the region. But they were an alarming signal, and Mr Solana will undoubtedly be seeking further clarification during his stopovers in Hungary and Romania.



Out of control: A gunman cruising the streets of Monrovia where almost every shop and office has been looted

Photograph: AP

Aid agencies leave Liberia to its fate

TINA SUSMAN
Associated Press

Monrovia - Liberians have been left to fend for themselves among drug-dealing gangs of gunmen and looters running rampant in their capital, after the world's aid groups abandoned the warring country.

A two-day ceasefire was barely holding yesterday, despite a provisional truce, as the shelling of an army barracks continued

and small-arms fire clattered throughout Monrovia. All shops and office buildings in the capital have been looted and most of them destroyed.

More than 60,000 Monrovia have been left homeless. "I pity you Liberian civilians," a Nigerian peace-keeper told a woman as she looked for powdered milk for her baby. "The warlords will never give you a chance to live a normal life."

While armed men raced

through the streets in stolen vehicles, brandishing AK-47s and grenades, they no longer appeared to be menacing civilians. Red Cross workers began to clear dozens of bodies from the streets.

The African peace-keepers vowed to put an end to the siege of a military barracks where thousands of Liberians were holed up with supporters of the warlord who sparked the current round of warfare. At least

37 peace-keepers were being held hostage at the barracks, where seven people have died from an outbreak of cholera.

Nearly half of Liberia's 2.6 million people have sought refuge from seven years of civil war. After eight days of fighting, in which 20 people have been confirmed dead, aid teams said they were pulling out of the "absolute anarchy".

The United Nations and the Red Cross were forced to with-

draw when looters overran their offices, they said. "It has been a bloody nightmare," said Isakasa Kinsoto, of the UN World Food Programme. "The UN system as a whole is completely destroyed by looters."

Even Médecins sans Frontières said it was planning to pull out its team. Like the Red Cross, the group works in dangerous conditions and is traditionally among the last to leave areas of conflict.

ANC's Mr Fixit lured by business career



Ramaphosa: Key role

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

The incarnations of Cyril Ramaphosa have been many: student firebrand, union hard-hat, political negotiator, secretary-general of the ANC and president of the assembly drawing up a constitution for South Africa.

In few weeks, however, Mr Ramaphosa, 43, will be leaving politics for business, a move greeted with both enthusiasm and dismay. Many considered him a main contender for Nelson Mandela's mantle when he leaves office in 1999; Mr

Ramaphosa's rival, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, is now undisputed crown prince of the ANC and almost certainly South Africa's next president.

Officially, Mr Ramaphosa's decision to leave parliament next month for a position in New Africa Investment Limited (Nail) - one of the few black conglomerates listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange - is being touted as move to strengthen black business.

Fundists are also saying it could lead to "the biggest advance in black empowerment in South African history". Nail is trying to wrest from Anglo

American Corporation a 48-per-cent stake in the Johnnic company, which has majority shares in a firm which owns South Africa's biggest weekend paper, the *Sunday Times*, plus *Business Day* and the weekly *Financial Mail*.

What Nail needed was a tough negotiator, a job well suited to Mr Ramaphosa, who in 1993 spearheaded the ANC's negotiations with the last white-minority government.

Asked about his latest move, he said: "It used to be taboo to even talk about people on the left ... getting into business. But the realities we are now dealing

with have brought a completely new perspective. It dictates that we should play a key role in the economy - have real clout."

But there may be reasons other than a desire to influence the business scene which led Mr Ramaphosa to leave politics. ANC sources say Mr Mbeki outmanoeuvred him to remain Mr Mandela's favourite to succeed him.

Sources close to Mr Ramaphosa have indicated that by leaving the government now he may be planning for the longer term: seeking to expand his base of support, to stage a political comeback for 2004.

Hostage freed by Eta after 341 days

ELIZABETH NASH
Madrid

The Basque businessman Jose Maria Aldaya, who was kidnapped by Eta separatists nearly a year ago for failing to pay protection money or "revolutionary tax", was freed early yesterday morning. During more than 11 months of captivity, Eta's longest-held hostage became Spain's most powerful focus for popular revulsion against the Basque separatists.

Political leaders greeted the news with relief and joy, and hailed the persistence of anti-Eta peace movements who mobilised ever larger demonstrations in Mr Aldaya's support several times a week since his kidnapping last May. None the less, the decision to free him was Eta's own, taken after the organisation had received up to 150m pesetas (£750,000) ransom from the industrialist's family, and owed nothing to either mass demonstrations or police manhunt.

"It was unfortunate," remarked Jose Maria Aznar, the leader of the conservative Popular Party, who is due to form the new Spanish government, "that Mr Aldaya's freedom was consequence of a decision of his captors and not achieved through the actions of the security forces."

Mr Aldaya was freed in wooded hills near the Basque town of Egoibar in the early hours of yesterday and made his way to a restaurant where he telephoned the police and his family. A spokesman said he was in good physical and mental shape, and that he would give a full account of his ordeal tomorrow.

Security officials believe Mr Aldaya's seizure and long detention was orchestrated by a special Eta kidnap squad that operated separately from other Eta commands. This squad remains intact, despite mammoth police operations in recent months and well-trumpeted detentions of Eta suspects and seizures of arms caches.

Mr Aldaya, 54, whose transport company is based near the Basque city of San Sebastian, is a prosperous businessman but far from a financial mogul. His



Jose Maria Aldaya: Freed after family paid £750,000

family said Eta's ransom demands far exceeded their means, and this is thought to have been the main obstacle to obtaining his earlier release.

The operation marks not only a logistical coup for Eta, but also a financial one. The Interior Ministry suspect that fear among Basque entrepreneurs caused by the kidnapping prompted a flow of contributions to Eta's coffers by those eager to avoid a similar fate.

Eta still holds Jose Antonio Ortega Lara, a prison officer from the Basque town of Logroño captured in January. The organisation says it will release him only when the government agrees to return more than 500 Eta prisoners dispersed around Spain to prisons nearer their homes.

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Protests as Peking 'consults' colony

STEPHEN VINES
Hong Kong

China's first attempt at wide-spread consultations on selecting Hong Kong's leadership after the end of British rule was given a cool reception by demonstrators in the colony yesterday. Protesters held up birdcages to symbolise the constraints on the consultation exercise.

Earlier, officials ejected two representatives of the Federation of Hong Kong Students from the hotel where the discussions were taking place. One, Sung Chi Tak, tried to protest about the abolition of the legislature. His colleague, Ivy Chan, distributed leaflets. "We were invited to attend but they didn't want to hear what we wanted to say," Ms Chan said. Later, about 1,000 demonstrators marched to the hotel.

China had already signalled the limits to the consultation exercise after banning the main

teachers' organisation, one of the biggest professional organisations in the territory, from taking part. The ban was imposed because the teachers planned to send two representatives who are leaders of the colony's democracy movement and have publicly criticised China's plan to abolish the legislature.

The only dissenting voice allowed to make its views known was the Bar Association. Its chairwoman, Gladys Li, was given about three minutes to explain why lawyers thought China was acting beyond the law in shutting down the legislature.

This small gesture of openness was greeted with a banner headline in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper which proclaimed: "Voices of dissent get a hearing": a leading article congratulated China on its flexibility.

The *Psz* was not alone in taking this view, a reflection of just how low expectations are of

China listening to those who do not toe the party line. All opinion polls show overwhelming opposition to China's plans for abolishing the legislature, and reflect little public confidence in the Preparatory Committee of Hong Kong and Chinese members who are making the key decisions about the establishment of the new government which takes office next year.

Elizabeth Wong, the former head of the government's health and social welfare department, who is now a legislator, said yesterday: "I just hope they [China] leave us alone, but it's a small hope."

She joined the demonstration because she was worried about the way China seemed to be getting its new administration "off on the wrong foot".

Chinese officials insist that they are prepared to listen to all points of view. After the students were thrown out of yesterday's consultations, Chen Zuo-er, a high-ranking official,

said that if the students had presented their views in a proper manner they would have been given a hearing. He denied that China was willing to listen only to those who agreed with its policies.

The consultation exercise has been headed by Lu Ping, China's most senior official dealing with Hong Kong affairs, who is in the territory on one of his rare visits. Mr Lu is viewed as a moderate but in his only public speech on this occasion he merely went over well trodden ground explaining China's position on who would qualify for residence in the territory.

Despite a reluctance to listen to local people who hold opposing views, Chinese officials indicated that they might be prepared to consult foreign businessmen in the territory through overseas chambers of commerce. Peking is anxious to maintain Hong Kong as an international business centre.

Hospital blast kills six



Pakistan's Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, examining damage after an explosion that killed six people and wounded 30 yesterday at a cancer hospital outside Lahore which was built by the former Pakistan cricket captain Imran Khan. He said it was a bomb attack aimed at frightening him into giving up his social-welfare aims but declined to say who could have done it. The blast occurred a day after Imran, a critic of the government, said he was consulting aides about launching a political party. He built the hospital, named after his mother, who died of cancer, through donations. Photograph: AP

IN BRIEF

Azeri ex-president held in Moscow

Moscow — Ayaz Mutalibov, ex-president of Azerbaijan, and a former defence minister, Ragim Gaziye, have been arrested here. They are wanted by the Baku authorities in connection with attempted coups against President Geidar Aliyev. Mr Mutalibov was ousted as president 1992. Mr Gaziye was sentenced to death in absentia last year. Russian news agencies quoted Azeri security ministry sources as saying a delegation had left Baku for Moscow to negotiate the extradition of the two men. *Reuters*

Wrong fire warning

Düsseldorf — The wrong evacuation message was broadcast during Germany's worst airport fire, officials said, and may have inadvertently sent to their deaths some of the 16 people killed.

Survivors told how some 2,500 staff and travellers at Düsseldorf airport panicked on seeing smoke and tumbled over each other to find fire exits during Thursday's blaze. *Reuters*

Libya overture

Cairo — Libya has asked Britain to restore diplomatic relations, which were broken 12 years ago after a shooting in London, according to the official Libyan news agency.

Libya's foreign ministry made the request in a message to the Italian Embassy in Tripoli, which handles British interests in the country. *AP*

Fishermen seized

Tbilisi — Georgia accused separatists from its Abkhazia province of abducting the crews of two fishing vessels in international waters.

A spokesman for the Georgian leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, made the accusation as Russia prepared to turn up the heat on rebels by cutting Abkhaz telephone links today. The spokesman said an Abkhaz patrol boat had taken six men into the rebel-held province from the boats in international waters in the Black Sea. *Reuters*

Life for Egyptian spy

Cairo — An Egyptian state security court sentenced an Egyptian man to life imprisonment with hard labour for spying for Israel. *Reuters*

'Castrator' arrested

Johannesburg — South African police have arrested a transvestite hairdresser suspected of killing four men and castrating one of them. Samuel Jacques Coetzee, 25, and an unnamed suspected accomplice were arrested on Saturday in Johannesburg. *Reuters*

Weighty award

Peking — Peking crowned a 27-year-old woman weighing 170kg (27 stone) as the fattest person in the Chinese capital, Xinhua news agency said.

Outweighing the 1,000 contestants, Su Juan won diet food worth 5,000 yuan (£400). Fat has replaced malnutrition as the major health problem of teenagers in China. *Reuters*

Ugly town that new money built

SHENZHEN DAYS

Shenzhen is the sort of town which won't be nice when it's finished. Goodness only knows how long it will take to finish. In the meantime, it is little more than a ungainly mess towering over the border with Hong Kong.

No one knows how many people live here. Maybe there are as many as 5 million people in Greater Shenzhen, a vast number without official permission and no one in the municipal government has the energy, let alone the political will, to clear them out.

Shenzhen is a two-border town — one with Hong Kong, the other with the rest of China — put there to keep out the hordes of job-seekers who would, and sometimes do, give all they own to find work in factories which pay three or four times more than they can earn in their home provinces.

This is the town built under the watchful eye of the ageing patriarch Deng Xiaoping, whose giant image is splashed across a hoarding in the town centre. The Chinese leader has not

allowed his image to be displayed in this way anywhere else in China. But in this, as in so many other respects, Shenzhen is different. This is the place he had in mind when he made his famous remark about "to get rich is glorious".

Aspects of richness abound but aspects of glory are thin on the ground. The new Chinese rich are easy to spot. They sit in the marble-clad hotels sipping brandy, accompanied by a statuary young female companion, usually from the northern provinces, favoured for producing taller females of fair skin.

As for glory, it is hard to describe the litter-filled streets as glorious. Nor are the semi-finished but fully occupied buildings anything to shout about. They will probably never be fully completed.

Everything is for sale in Shenzhen. The world's oldest pro-

fession is much in evidence as I found within moments of crossing the border from Hong Kong and had difficulty making it clear that I was looking for a taxi, not a transport of delight.

If the reports in the Chinese and Hong Kong press are correct, Shenzhen is also filled to the brim with illegal gambling dens, drug-pushers and unlicensed premises of many varieties. I couldn't help wondering whether, for example, the Happy Tooth dental store was staffed by fully qualified dental graduates or populated by slick marketing graduates who had erected a cheerful-looking neon sign displaying a smiling tooth, delighted with the treatment it was receiving at the hands of the dubious-looking, white-coated assistants who seemed to be doing a roaring business.

McDonald's is often the first port of call for curious visitors

from other parts of China. They know they have truly arrived, once they have a Big Mac safely in their hands.

Out-of-towners are easy to spot. They are often in their Sunday best and wearing clothes with fake designer labels stitched to the outside of the sleeves. The more streetwise inhabitants of Shenzhen, who have learnt more about fashion by watching Hong Kong television, know that labels must be discreetly concealed.

Visitors from Hong Kong cross into Shenzhen on a bridge above the thin river. As you reach the Chinese side you are confronted by a large digital clock counting down the days until the British colony returns to the motherland.

"It's like the clock on a time bomb," says a Chinese friend who passes it regularly. "They seem to be telling us that when it hits zero, we'll have to be like them."

Like Shenzhen? Perish the thought.

Stephen Vines

Reluctant Russian army begins Chechnya withdrawal

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Boris Yeltsin's high-stakes plan to end the Chechnya war before the presidential election is set to totter a few steps further forward today with the start of a gradual withdrawal of some Russian troops from the war-torn republic.

The first tentative stage of a partial pull-out is scheduled to begin with the withdrawal of

forces, mostly from northern areas of Chechnya where there is little or no fighting.

Yuri Baturin, the Kremlin's national security adviser, yesterday flew to the Chechen capital Grozny to supervise the operation, amid loud rumblings from the Russian military that it will be suspended if there is an upsurge in hostilities.

Fourteen units from the Russian Army and the Interior Ministry will take part in the first

stage of what looks certain to be a long, slow and incomplete withdrawal of troops to bases in neighbouring areas, including Ingushetia and Dagestan. There are plans for the process to continue throughout the year.

With two months to go to the Russian presidential election, the withdrawal has as much to do with campaign politics as it has with concrete progress towards a plausible future settlement. Mr Yeltsin has admitted

the Chechen conflict may destroy his re-election chances if it is allowed to fester; he desperately wants to be seen to be making progress with the peace plan which he unveiled a fortnight ago.

But ending the 16-month conflict within such a short time span is an ambitious undertaking. A more probable reading of his plan is that he is seeking to wind down the war, removing it altogether from

the television headlines — which are already increasingly dominated with news of his campaigning. Yesterday they showed the President leading the Easter mass in the newly rebuilt Christ the Saviour cathedral in Moscow, the first since it was demolished by Stalin 65 years ago.

Russian generals have made clear that they intend to carry on fighting the rebels by mounting "special operations". These

assaults are supposed to target the separatist forces alone, but — if Russia's past performance in the region is any guide — they seem bound to include numerous civilian casualties.

Although Mr Yeltsin called an immediate ceasefire on 31 March, fighting and Russian bombing raids have continued, with scores of casualties on both sides. Reports circulated yesterday of clashes in Grozny, and at least three villages. According to Itar-Tass news agency, gunmen shot out the windows of the heavily guarded Chechen government building in Grozny.

Mr Yeltsin has offered to hold indirect talks with the rebel leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev. But an aide representing the president of the Russian republic of Tatarstan, Mintimer Shaimiyev — the chosen intermediary — failed to meet General Dudayev on a trip to the Caucasus last week.

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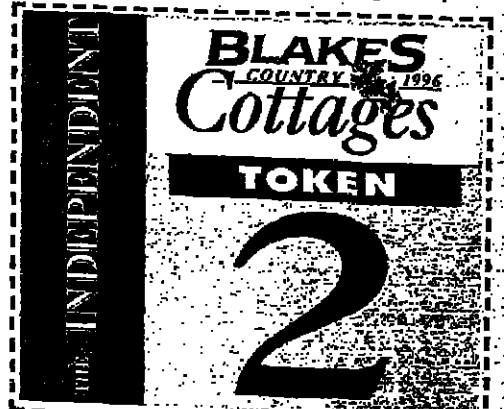
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April 20 1996

Do our genes control us?

Hardly a week goes by without a startling discovery in genetic research. Last week, one of the most startling yet was delivered – isolation of a gene that might help explain why we age.

Genetic research means we might identify what causes previously intractable illnesses and disorders. Four thousand of the estimated 50,000 to 100,000 genes that provide the blueprint for our development have been identified. Almost all of them may be known within a decade.

This research once concentrated almost exclusively on explaining hereditary components in conditions such as haemophilia or disorders such as schizophrenia. Yet it may be possible soon to test every facet of our genetic inheritance. Some of the most radical new geneticists say it is becoming possible to identify genes that may encourage depression, religious commitment and alcoholism.

It is this development that worries people who fear genetic discoveries will be misused to stigmatise groups of people. More prosaically, the idea that we might find genetic explanations for behaviour throws up a host of ethical and moral questions. Could gene tests be used to discriminate against people in employment or insurance? Could genetic engineering create a master race of children with perfect personalities and features?

Here, we publish an essay by Professor Michael Rutter, arguably Britain's leading genetic researcher and certainly one of its most controversial. He argues for a new synthesis between nature and nurture, genetic and environmental explanations for behaviour, a synthesis that allows for the influence of genetics, but only by admitting how complex that influence is. We plan further contributions to the genetics debate in coming weeks.

The old-fashioned notion that nature and nurture act as separate, independent influences is dead. Rather, genetic evidence has been crucial in indicating how the interplay between the two may operate. Of course, to study that interplay, it is necessary to use research methods that differentiate genetic and environmental effects. Advances in molecular genetics that allow actual genes to be identified take things a step further. We can now find out what genes actually do. Genes "code for" (influence) proteins, not behaviour; it makes no sense to talk of a gene for crime. The path between a gene, the protein it produces and behaviour involves a new search, which will be indirect and uncertain, dealing in tendencies and possibilities.

Quantitative genetic studies have shown that both genetic and environmental factors are influential in variations in almost all kinds of human behaviour. The relative strength of genetic

course, will not determine the specific content of those beliefs.

Second, genetics also affects differences in people's experiences of stress or adversity. Initially, that sounds implausible, but genes come into the picture in two main ways. Parents pass on genes as well as experiences to their children and, to some extent, the two are connected. Parents who get drunk and quarrel are providing a discordant, disruptive family environment. But genes will be playing a role in the personality characteristics that make them such difficult parents and those genes will be passed on, too. It becomes an important question – do behavioural risks to children reared in such families come from genes or environment (or a mixture of the two)?

The other role of genes comes from the fact that, by our behaviour, we all shape and select our environments. For example, some children are popular, well-liked by all, and tend to be the

By Michael Rutter

and environmental effects varies across behaviour and social circumstances. Nevertheless, it would be a fair generalisation to say the strength of genetic and environmental effects on human behaviour is roughly equal.

That does not sound a very exciting conclusion but it incorporates some findings that shape our thinking about nature and nurture in several important, and surprising, ways. To begin with, it firmly rejects any biologically deterministic view that genes could directly cause human behaviours. That is not how genes work and, in any case, environmental influences play a major role. Yet there is an equally necessary parallel rejection of environmental determinism.

People vary enormously in their behaviour; in part, this may reflect their upbringing or social circumstances, but in an equal part, it is likely to reflect their genes.

Three aspects of this finding tend to take people aback. First, genetics can affect characteristics such as religiosity or empathy as well as disorders such as schizophrenia or autism. It is not that genes determine religious beliefs; that would be ridiculous. But they do play a contributory (not deterministic) role in shaping personality features that influence how likely it is that a person will become heavily committed to religious beliefs. Genes, of

course, will not determine the specific content of those beliefs. Second, genetics also affects differences in people's experiences of stress or adversity. Initially, that sounds implausible, but genes come into the picture in two main ways. Parents pass on genes as well as experiences to their children and, to some extent, the two are connected. Parents who get drunk and quarrel are providing a discordant, disruptive family environment. But genes will be playing a role in the personality characteristics that make them such difficult parents and those genes will be passed on, too. It becomes an important question – do behavioural risks to children reared in such families come from genes or environment (or a mixture of the two)?

The third finding that tends to surprise people is that genes can influence traits such as sociability or emotionality, and not just diseases. Such genetically influenced characteristics play an important part in making people susceptible to serious mental disorders.

There is a general recognition that some diseases are inherited; most people know about cystic fibrosis or haemophilia. In the field of mental disorders, too, it is recognised that there are hereditary conditions such as Huntington's disease. How could the same thinking apply to depression, alcoholism or anti-social behaviour? It doesn't. But most medical conditions have multiple causes. For example, you don't inherit heart attacks, but genetic factors play a role in cholesterol levels and these constitute part of the risk pattern behind coronary artery disease. Take another example. A few



weeks ago, two groups of scientists reported localising a gene that contributed to a personality feature usually called novelty seeking or sensation seeking. Two aspects of this finding aroused excitement in the scientific community; first, this feature plays a part in the liability

Some crucial caveats, however, have to be inserted. First, sensation-seeking is only one of several factors that might be behind anti-social behaviour; in no way does it constitute the cause. Second, seeking novelty is not in itself a bad thing. It may lead to mountaineering, or the

should not be used to label individuals. The potential of genetic research lies in the discovery of how causal processes work and not in individual prediction.

A crucial feature of genetic studies lies in their power to demonstrate the true extent of environmental influences of behaviour. A few examples serve to illustrate this little-appreciated strength of genetic research. A study of twins, which makes it easier to identify genetic and environmental influences, has shown that much of the genetic risk of people having major depressive disorders lies in the genetic influence on the development of neuroticism, or emotionality. This genetic influence seems to operate, in part, by creating a vulnerability to environmental stresses.

A more striking example is schizophrenia, a mental disorder that involves a strong genetic component. Psychiatrists have long been puzzled by the observation that schizophrenia is much commoner in people in the UK of Afro-Caribbean origin. The finding that it is not

more common in those actually living in the Caribbean points strongly to the operation of some sort of environmentally mediated, psycho-social risk.

This whole field of research points to some important issues for which some sort of environmental explanation is likely to be required. For example, the rise in recent decades in frequency of suicide in young males (but not in older people) cannot be attributed to genes – the gene pool does not change that quickly. Similarly, the explanation for the US murder rate being 15 times that in the UK will not be due to genes (it is more likely due to lack of gun control).

If the challenge of understanding how the interplay operates is to be met, genetic researchers, psychosocial researchers and developmental researchers must work together in ways that has happened all too rarely in the past.

Professor Michael Rutter is honorary director of the MRC Child Psychiatry Unit, Institute of Psychiatry, in London.

Genes influence proteins; it makes no sense to talk of a gene for crime

to engage in anti-social behaviour and, second, the gene is concerned with neurotransmitters in the brain thought to influence behaviour.

It is too early as yet to know whether the finding will hold up but it carries the promise of beginning to understand how genetic factors might play a role in some types of anti-social behaviour. If science could deliver on that promise, it would be immensely useful in planning better programmes of prevention and intervention.

stock market or scientific discovery, or crime. The next challenge, then, is to discover circumstances that lead this trait to have beneficial outcomes rather than adverse ones.

Three consequences follow. Genes cannot be divided into "good" genes and "bad" genes. Only very rarely will it make sense to think of gene therapy to replace supposedly "bad" genes. As several genes are involved and because they are influential only alongside environmental factors, genetic discoveries

DIARY

Into the groove with new Labour

You never know who you might run into in a trade union canteen these days. John Prescott trying to impress Madonna (below) on the virtues of being middle class, perhaps.

The new Blairite political education trust, Progress, looks like having a bizarre weekend school next month. Set up last November, the trust plans to spread the word of new Labour to party activists, or build "their knowledge and confidence, enabling them to develop themselves and win support for Labour's ideas". As part of this training the trust plans to run a course called "Preparing for Government" at the Electrician Union's training college in Esher, Surrey, in mid-May. Shadow Cabinet members will be among the speakers.

However, the venue has attracted the attention of another grassroots political event. The location manager for the film of *Evita* has expressed an interest in the same weekend. Nothing has been booked but it was the building's resemblance to a French chateau and its stone staircase that the film company was interested in for scenes about Evita's travels through Europe. Madonna will be at the college if the booking goes ahead, and no doubt will be delighted to attend classes on Blairism at the millennium. Progress's director, Derek Draper, who is also Peter Mandelson's erstwhile Commons assistant said, "We are hoping we might be able to book it jointly."

I'll bet. It could be the best-attended weekend school of the decade.

Not quite a Fitz

These real-life Crackers are such a wheeze. Professor David Canter of Liverpool University, said to be one of the

models for the Robbie Coltrane figure in the TV series, chaired a seminar on "The broadening horizons of investigative psychology" at the British Psychological Society Conference in Brighton at the weekend. The society organised a press conference afterwards at which Professor Canter refused to answer any questions, instead haranguing the assembled journalists on the inadequacies of their organs (psychologists go in for that). Eventually, the journalists tired of the in-your-face psychology and walked out en masse in protest. Sadly, the point

seemed to be lost on the professor, who was overheard remarking to a colleague later that the journalists would have been an excellent group to study, adding: "Did you see how they just all rose as one and trooped out like that?"

Ouch! Edwina again

A suggested plot for Edwina Currie's next novel: MP gives interview to newspaper criticising her home city, education and

Jewish background; offends home city and Jewish community and gets her old mum into trouble. Any resemblance between that and any persons living or dead would, of course, be entirely coincidental. And it certainly should not be confused with Mrs Currie (below) telling the *Daily Mail* that she "was always glad to see the back of Liverpool", and was determined to leave the Jewish faith, and how she was estranged from her orthodox father. Mrs Currie has now had her invitation to address the Merseyside Jewish Theatre and Cultural Group withdrawn: the group's secretary Bertha Crawford says the community has been "outraged" by the MP's remarks; the *Jewish Chronicle* has taken up the story and Mrs Currie's mother, Pessie Cohen, may now lose her invitation to speak to Liverpool's Thursday Club for Jewish senior citizens on the subject of "My famous Daughter". Not a bad chapter one.

Security spectacle

Having put great faith in the impenetrable-looking security arrangements set up by Scotland Yard to stop terrorists setting foot in Docklands, I was greatly alarmed by a spectacle I witnessed at one of the many police checkpoints. At a sentry box near Marsh Wall, where the Docklands bomb went off, was a sight I cannot imagine striking fear into the hearts of would-be bombers.

My taxi driver, somewhat amused, alerted me to the fact that the WPC stationed there appeared to be leading an aerobics session for the bored constables charged with protecting the economic heartland of England. On closer inspection, it became clear they were heavily involved in a game of hopscotch. Or perhaps they were practising an Irish jig for infiltration purposes.

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Why more bombs are no solution

This is war, says the Israeli president, Chaim Weizman, was with a view to talk. In that connection between conflict and conversation lies the puzzle behind Israel's escalating aerial and artillery attacks on Lebanon. Sooner or later the effort will have to be made to renew contact with Hizbollah or their surrogates and supporters in Syria. The glittering prize is a peace more solid and stable than the stand-off that ruled on Israel's northern border until last week.

Whether the talk takes place at first-hand or through intermediaries, a restoration of the ceasefire in southern Lebanon and northern Galilee is a necessity. (No one, least of all the Israelis, can believe that this campaign will extinguish the terrorists.) The question becomes: will this military activity impede or hasten that inevitable resumption of talk.

The answer must be that action on this scale is a mistake. Of course, that is an easy enough judgement to make at such remove from Israeli border settlements within rocket reach of terrorist bases in Tyre. It is a judgement which has, too, to recognise that Shimon Peres is preferable as a winner of the national elections to be held in Israel at the end of next month, and that this action undoubtedly has a short-run party political content to it. Yet the Israeli government has miscalculated.

One reason is tactical. Air power is not forensic. There is enough evidence of that from theatres of open war. Planes and howitzers cannot be trusted to eliminate guerrillas on the ground. Shells produce "collateral damage". However much the Israelis may protest about misinterpretation of pictures of civilian casualties, they must take the public reaction in allied and friendly countries into account.

Another is strategic. Some 400,000

refugees on the boulevards of Beirut fleeing from the south of Lebanon do not count as a victory. That movement of people will make an already ineffective Lebanese national government lamer still, crippling economic recovery. Lebanon becomes even less fit as a partner in peace. In a rational world, maybe fleeing civilians would pressurise the Lebanese government into taking action against Hizbollah. But on past evidence it will not happen. The Israelis, moreover, are fatally ambiguous about Lebanese sovereignty. A stronger, more authoritative Beirut government must be in Israel's longer-run interests. This action diminishes the prospect.

A third reason is diplomatic. This action threatens to destabilise the region. The Israelis have eventually to come to terms with Syria. To President Assad the Israeli attacks are a humiliation that can only retard the process. If, as seems likely, the United States gave tacit approval for this military action, its role as the broker of renewed conversations leading eventually to a peace treaty between Israel and Syria becomes difficult to pick up.

Faced with rockets and bombs in its towns and cities the Israelis probably had to respond. But was there not an option that would have contained the conflict within the border corridor? Instead of proportionality, Mr Peres has gone for a big bang. He seems to have calculated that a huge and sudden escalation – this is the biggest operation in Lebanon since the invasion in 1982 – would demonstrate his strength. Yet this is a political gamble as well as a terrible risk for Israeli citizens for this is a game of bloody tit for tat. The Israelis have mobilised and shown their armed prowess. Further bombardment will achieve nothing.

Rail sell-off gives the wrong signals

Along with all its other health warnings, today's prospectus for the sale of Railtrack ought to carry a sticker saying this: "However many shares you buy as a private investor, this company is never going to belong to you." Public ownership of nationalised industry often meant precious little to the public; mass shareholding in the privatised companies means even less. What happened to electricity and telecoms was summed up in those recent words of British Gas chairman Richard Giordano to the effect that Sid – the small shareholder – can get lost.

Privatisation promised much, including the better education of the British public in the operations of the capital market. The lesson seems to be this – as long-term participants in the government of private enterprise, you are not wanted. Let nobody assert, as Mrs Thatcher once did, that some new era of shareholder democracy is dawning. This giant exercise in liquidating the state's assets has taught us virtually nothing about the way companies ought to be run. On the contrary, it has been only since privatisation that the fallibilities of boardroom control have become public concerns. Accountability is a livelier issue now than it ever was.

This helps explain why Ian Lang, secretary for Trade and Industry, is now to publish proposals on the rights of small shareholders. They must, at the very least, prevent company bigwigs behaving like that other great advocate of British private enterprise, Lord Hanson, who consistently squashed any signs of shareholder

activism. But why now, after the Cadbury inquiry instigated by the Confederation of British Industry into corporate governance and after the Greenbury inquiry instigated by the DTI itself? This is closing the stable door a mile late.

The object is to keep boards on their toes by assisting shareholders to ask and get answers to questions about how their property is being run. But the timing taints them. The Government is acting now for two related reasons. One is callow electioneering. The promise to pay a September dividend on Railtrack shares is part of the effort – bribery, pure and simple – but is unlikely to be effective because there are too many canny investors who will take the money, sell their shares and vote Labour. Appearing to be the friend of the small investor sounds merely opportunistic.

The other reason is deeper. New Labour has made a rhetorical splash with its musings about a "stakeholder" society. It is actually little more than a mish-mash of old Labour fraternity, new communitarianism, European social partnership and a nod and a wink toward profit-related pay. But what return fire do the Tories have? Global trends in capitalism and the changing patterns of ownership they have brought make relaunching shareholder democracy well-nigh impossible. The rise of private pension provision, encouraged by the Government itself, alters the geography of ownership and benefit. The way companies are run demands scrutiny. But reviving shareholder populism, if that is the Government's ploy, is a non-starter.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Newbury and the roads dilemma: why we must break with the British car culture

Sir: You suggest that the "Third Battle of Newbury" has been a damp squib, (leading article, 5 April); that is not how things seem here in Newbury. Direct action against the Newbury bypass is unprecedented in scale, with policing and security expenditure already vastly eclipsing that of previous campaigns. The numbers and commitment of campaigners, both local and national, has been much greater than at Twyford Down, the M11 link or anywhere else, with thousands taking part, and 750 arrests in 12 weeks – and just for the Preliminary Contract, less than 2 per cent of the whole.

However, you rightly highlight the pivotal significance that the Newbury campaign, has assumed for the anti-roads movement. Newbury's traffic problems have come to symbolise the national transport dilemma: stuck in a school-term Friday afternoon Newbury jam, the environment seems a tiresome irrelevance. Nonetheless, Newbury people remain deeply divided on the bypass; the feeling could be summarised as "It's a terrible shame, but we must do something now."

This is surely echoed nationally. Britons are opposed to destructive road-building, yet curse the traffic jams, and are still wedded to car culture. The social and environmental damage due to the car has never been as apparent as now, its century year. What we have and will continue to see at Newbury is not any fragmentation of the anti-roads movement, but rather its development into a anti-traffic movement.

TIM ALLMAN
Road Alert!
Newbury, Berkshire

Sir: David Rendel MP (letter, 9 April) places great weight on the outdated concept of an "integrated transport strategy". Integration without demand management will not solve the nation's transport problems. The Newbury bypass has tested the environmental

commitment of the Liberal Democrats. This has been revealed as a thin green veneer. With local elections in May and a general election not far away, those concerned about the environment must challenge all the main parties and force them to adopt policies that will help create a more sustainable society.

TIM MANNING
Wokingham, Berkshire

Sir: Mary Rich (letter, 12 April) is living in cloud-cuckoo land if she believes the Newbury bypass will do anything for anyone. With inevitable satellite development along it, it will simply shift pollution from one residential site to another and, with huge increases in road traffic predicted, it will eventually run its inevitable overflow back through central Newbury. The only answer to Newbury's problem – the rest of Britain's, too – is firm control on traffic volume. But who is going to enforce it?

H T JONES
London E11

Sir: Yet again we have proposals for a 12-lane M25 (report 3 April). The Government ignores the evidence from their own commissioned reports that new roads generate extra traffic and thus quickly fill these attempts to "relieve" congestion.

These new efforts will cost £93.8m and will be funded by the taxpayer. Why not private lanes for the M25, or private toll roads anywhere else? Simple. None of us would pay for the use of these new roads, if we had to do so voluntarily at the point of use rather than involuntarily through taxes. The free market, given the chance, would reject these new roads.

RUPERT FAUSSET
London SW12

Sir: For years, academics have been warning of the dangers of traffic exhaust pollutants. They have shown that vehicle exhaust is linked to respiratory and cardio-vascular diseases. The

Government, influenced by strong car and oil industry lobbying, have been reluctant to follow their advice, citing that their findings are not conclusive. Yet, as we know from the BSE fiasco, it would be better to err on the side of caution.

Current technology provides us with the ability to reduce car exhaust emissions – lean-burn and battery-powered engines, catalytic converters, city diesel or petroleum gas for public transport. Unfortunately, their implementation is left mostly to the discretion of motorists or bus companies, just as in the early 1980s, regulation of cattle feed was left to the farming industry. The Government must ensure that another health and environmental time-bomb is not left waiting to explode.

ROY PRESTON
Christchurch, Dorset

Sir: Nicholas Gregory (letters, 12 April) exhorts motorists to abandon the clogged-up motorways and use instead the A and B roads. This is not welcome news for vulnerable country road users such as cyclists and pedestrians.

Too many motorists treat country lanes as race tracks. TV programmes such as *Top Gear* and adverts showing performance cars hurtling round hairpins in Tuscany encourage this anti-social behaviour. If more and more motorists leave the roads designed for their use and speed around rural areas, death and injury rates will rise. The laudable Sustrans National Cycle Network will rely heavily on country lanes. It won't be much of a traffic-free network if motorists on long journeys decide to leave the motorways and zip through the lanes.

An increasing number of towns are installing traffic calming measures – speed bumps, police cameras, chicanes. Perhaps rural areas should consider doing likewise. The tranquillity of the countryside might depend on it.

CARLTON REID
Editor, *Cycle Industry*
Newcastle upon Tyne

Independent minds at the Bar

Sir: In Polly Toynbee's account (10 April) of the decision of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee that independent lawyers (barristers or solicitors) should alone be permitted to present cases in the higher courts, she includes a false slur on the integrity and independence of mind of prosecuting barristers.

In commenting on my stated belief that in the more serious cases an independent mind is needed as a safeguard against abuse, she adds a sly innuendo that barristers were responsible for recent miscarriages of justice.

The truth is that in countless cases every year, barristers are exercising their independent judgement whether the evidence is sufficient for a case to proceed, whether a plea to a lesser charge should be accepted, or whether potentially helpful evidence should be disclosed to the defence.

But of course it is not on the basis of evidence provided by barristers that cases proceed, they have to work on the material provided to them.

So, for example, in the Guildford Four trial, the decision of the

Court of Appeal to quash the convictions of the Four was based solely on the alleged fabrication by Surrey police of their confessions (as Sir John May concluded in his painstaking inquiry into the case). As for Matrix Churchill, which she also cites, lead defendant Trevor Abraham's Counsel, Gilbert Gray QC, has made clear that the true cause of the wrongful prosecution was Alan Clark's failure, until cross-examination, to tell the truth about his own role in encouraging manufacturers not to give truthful descriptions in expert documents. It was this economy with "the actuality" that led to the collapse of the prosecution.

Surely the fact that such miscarriages of justice can occur when police or government ministers make mistakes or worse make it more, not less, important that a second and independent mind should be brought to bear to give a greater chance that the truth alone will be presented in court?

PETER GOLDSMITH QC
The General Council
of the Bar
London WC1

What older teachers have to offer

Sir: How can the NASUWT so easily dismiss the qualities that older teachers bring to the classroom (report, 12 April)? If students are "indisciplined and less respectful of authority", is this not a situation where age and experience would be of worth?

To declare that teaching "could prove too much for an older person ... you have to have a lot of vigour to survive" shows a deep misunderstanding of older people's capabilities. Many over-50s are active in demanding jobs; leaders of industry and members of parliament provide just two examples.

An older face in the classroom could go some way to rebuild the intergenerational links missing from so many children's lives. It is only when the generations have the opportunity to work, study and socialise together that we can hope to build a more cohesive society.

child. However, it is precisely because teachers feel they are being left alone to cope with such disruptive pupils, unsupported and with fewer resources, that they choose to highlight the dramatic effects of pupil violence at their assemblies.

Far from just raising the issue as a soundbite, teachers in the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, at their Torquay conference, voted for a resolution which recognised that there was insufficient provision to deal with disruptive children under current legislation.

They also voted to seek the establishment of area committees involving parents, governors, social services, the police and other concerned organisations whose role would be to create structures for the care and welfare of disruptive pupils.

Teachers' unions have not "hijacked the issue". They have merely demanded that politicians do not ignore it. They have also offered some very constructive ways forward.

EBER A KINGTON
Branch Secretary (Merton)
Association of Teachers
and Lecturers
Ewell, Surrey

The Tory secret

Sir: Since 1979 I have long been puzzled by the Tories' fierce determination to privatise all aspects of public service in the face of evidence that there may be people who would not benefit from their reforming zeal.

I now, courtesy of Keith Joseph, have the answer. In 1976 he wrote that "the blind, unplanned wisdom of the market ... is overwhelmingly superior to the well-researched, rational, systematic, well-meaning, co-operative, science-based, forward looking, statistically respectable plans of government" (*Stranded in the Middle Ground*, 1976).

So that's all right then!

MICHAEL HOLOHAN
Salford

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Indelible article

Sir: Eagle Eye (12 April) fears Virginia Bottomley may bewilder the younger voter by saying "an hotel".

I did a quick and unscientific survey of my colleagues, all of whom are under 40 and most on the green side of 30. We all say "an hotel", dropping the "h", rather than "a hotel".

DR RACHEL DUNLOP
(aged 27 and a half)
The Policy Studies Institute
London NW1

150 years of gloom

Sir: You report (12 April) that "gene therapy or drugs might prolong active human life to 150 years".

If only the rest of the day's news had encouraged me to think that this would be a good thing. SHIRLEY COULSON
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

Notes on culling and other drastic solutions

"The attitude of the Tory government to the cow population of Britain is a bit like the attitude of Boris Yeltsin to the population of Chechnya. Shoot and bomb them until there are so few left that people think the problem has been solved. But this is no solution at all."

The speaker is Ivor Quentin, Professor of Drastic Solutions at the University of Milton Keynes. He has been keeping his eye on the proposals to exterminate all cows over a certain age in Britain, and, frankly, he finds the whole thing mad as the highest level.

"Frankly," he says, "I find the whole thing mad as the highest level. But then, you might say that almost all drastic solutions are mad as the highest level. Think of Hitler's final solution for getting rid of the Jews. Think of Stalin's final solution for getting rid of all small farmers in Russia. Think of ... oh, I don't know, think of the Americans' plan for getting rid of almost everyone in North Vietnam. Even if these things seem to work in the short term, they never work out for the best and often create more problems than you had before.... Think of Afghanistan. It was always said, though I never knew how true



MILES KINGTON

it was, that when Russian generals wanted to clear a minefield, they sent the Russian infantry walking through it. They lost a lot of soldiers, but it certainly cleared the minefield."

How does this tie up with the beef crisis back home?

"There is no beef crisis," says Professor Quentin. "It is only the Tory government who are creating one. The BSE situation has actually been improving all during the Nineties. If you wanted to have a beef panic, it should have been in about 1990. Having one now is ridiculous, but then the Tory government is psychologically prepared to do ridiculous things."

What exactly does that mean? "Well, you'll find that when governments have been in power too long, they start doing silly things. It is almost like entering second child-

hood, or getting very wilful in old age. They have dim memories of the days when they were purposeful and dynamic, and they try to repeat those days, but they end up doing silly things, like slaughtering lots of cattle, selling off the railways or, in the case of our government, giving away the railways. Michael Howard's compulsion to build more prisons is the sort of idea that a political party has in its second childhood. It looks dynamic, it sounds purposeful and it is only going to create more problems than it solves."

Is mass culling ever justified? "It is very seldom worth it. It leaves so many bad memories behind. The '15 and the '45 and Butcher Cumberland are still bitterly remembered in Scotland. The mass executions after the Monmouth Rising in 1685 are still remembered in the West Country – in fact, the Bloody Assizes and Judge Jeffreys are still bywords for cruelty."

Yes, but at least the West Country didn't rise up again against the Government. "That's true, but they still don't vote Tory much down there either, even after 300 years. And it didn't do Judge Jeffreys much good either.

People tend to forget that he was clapped in the Tower of London as soon as James II died, and he remained there for the rest of his life.

So mass culling never works? "Hardly over. I'll be interested to see what happens in the current struggle for power in the rugby world, where the RFU is being culled by the major rugby clubs – that might work."

I'm sorry, I haven't been keeping up with rugby... "Oh, it has been infected with what Will Carling might call 'old fart disease', and the younger members have been trying to eliminate all rugby administrators over 65. Something like that."

A bit like getting rid of Marmaduke Hussey from the BBC?

"That's a little different. Nobody knows why Hussey was ever appointed in the first place, though it may have been on the principle that you should always appoint someone like Hussey so that you've got someone like Hussey around to fire if necessary."

For more details of Professor Quentin's disturbing ideas, send up for his latest factsheet: 'The case for selective culling of Tory MPs'

Keyhole opens up painless surgery

Sir: Either the media reporting of advances in gallbladder removal ("Keyhole surgery" takes longer and costs more" – 13 April) has missed the point of the study, or the folk at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield are wasting valuable time.

My gallbladder was removed by "keyhole surgery" three years ago. Perhaps my surgeon, Mr William Brough, was particularly brilliant, but within a few hours of the operation I was enjoying a full meal and had not experienced one moment's discomfort. I was back at work two weeks later, and it is now extremely difficult to find the tiny marks left by the three incisions.

Those of my acquaintance who have undergone the traditional "rip-em-open" style of surgery which involves cutting through abdominal muscle to reach the gallbladder can still vividly recall the post-operative pain and the length of time it took to recover abdominal strength. Not one of those people was back at work in a month.

The good doctors at Sheffield should bear in mind their first duty – to the patient, not the account manager.

TONY WILKIE-MILLAR
Stockport, Cheshire

150 years of gloom

A novel tradition you just can't put down

If women are treated fairly as writers, why have they won so few literary gongs? And why the backlash against the Orange Prize?

Assume the position for crash landing—head on knees, hands over head: another bolt of male backlash is about to strike. Today, the Orange Prize announces its first shortlist, ready for next month's final judging. It is the biggest fiction prize, worth £30,000 to the winner—more than the Booker, more than the Whitbread. It is also open to many more writers than either of those, since it includes any novel written in the English language. But no men. That is why we can expect yet another electric storm of abuse.

When I was asked to become a patron of the prize, my first instinct was disquiet. Surely, in a world that is hard on women, the one place they triumph is on the printed page? They adorn the literary canon, from Austen to Eliot, Woolf to Murdoch. More women write and read novels than men. It is women's one unquestioned domain in the arts, where a plethora of magnificent role models is positively daunting to the female beginner. Words are women's forte—girls gossip, boys grunt.

But on reflection, I thought that

if an anonymous benefactor, an unknown 80-year-old woman, generously wants to give such a large sum to the best female writer each year, why not? Throughout history, rich patrons have scattered money whimsically at the arts—though rarely, if ever, to a woman. This is not lottery or Arts Council money, and goodness knows, most literary writers need cash. I accepted the invitation to be a patron.

Critics of the prize protest that since there are so many great women writers, why should they need a special prize? The answer is this—if women are equally revered as iconic, classic writers up there in the firmament alongside men, why have they won so few of the big literary prizes? Here is the miserable tally: Nobel Prize for Literature (£600,000)—eight women since 1901 (not V Woolf); Whitbread Book of the Year (£21,000)—two women since 1985; Booker Prize (£20,000)—10 women since 1969; WH Smith Literary Prize (£10,000)—eight women since 1959; Hawthornden Prize (£2,000)—one female winner since 1919. WH

Smith Thumping Good Read Prize of £5,000 has never been won by a woman.

So women write, publish and read more novels than men, and men say they are treated equally. ("Jane Austen's my favourite writer!" they cry in unison.) But when it comes to it, men who predominate on most judging panels don't like what modern women write. "Good", "better" and "best" are all such subjective opinions—hence the furiously enjoyable battles that quite properly break out among literary judges. One judge's meaty novel is another man's BSE-infected carcass of a book. There is no way to know if contemporary female writers are better or worse than men. Even the test of time is often a matter of luck as much as merit, usually these days depending on the haphazard taste of those choosing exam set-books. Virago's magnificent reprint of forgotten women's works proved that time and again.

What is certain is that female writers are afforded less respect.



POLLY TOYNEEBE

It is something women are thought to do while the bread bakes in the oven

Women themselves, as writers and judges have often unconsciously succumbed to this attitude, hence the ultra-serious, forbidding, domineering and exclusive aura of some of those few who have managed to win the Booker—Irish Murdoch, Anita Brookner and AS Byatt. Female writers are taken for granted, because it is something women are

thought to do like needlework and letter-writing, almost as a natural part of their domestic lives. They do it at home, sitting at the kitchen table while the bread bakes in the oven, waiting for the children to come home. Expressing themselves is their *métier* and writing novels is their kind of therapy.

Alongside the fogies of the *Times Literary Supplement*, the chief bully and baiter of the Orange Prize is *Times* columnist Simon Jenkins, who gave the game away when he claimed: "Men might ruefully comment that some women writers have an easier time financially by not being the principal family earner. Authorship is a hard, tough and unprofitable activity. Novels win little bread, and few men who are sole breadwinners have time or money for it. Orange's money would not come amiss to such men."

Now note the language and attitude that pervades this thought. Authorship for men is "hard, tough and unprofitable". Rugged, hunter-gatherer, Hemingway men take huge risks and sacrifices in pursuit

of their savage god. Driven to write, bravely casting aside a more secure living, they are heroic and serious. Little women do it as a sideline, coaxed by their real job as wife and mother, their art secondary to their families, so of course they are not to be taken as seriously.

The story has, of course, often been written the other way round. Most great male writers have devoted their whole lives to writing, with useful wives caring for them and their children. Most female writers have had to do everything as well as write, and these days usually a job, too. Writing and looking after children go very badly together, hence most male writers have been abominable fathers.

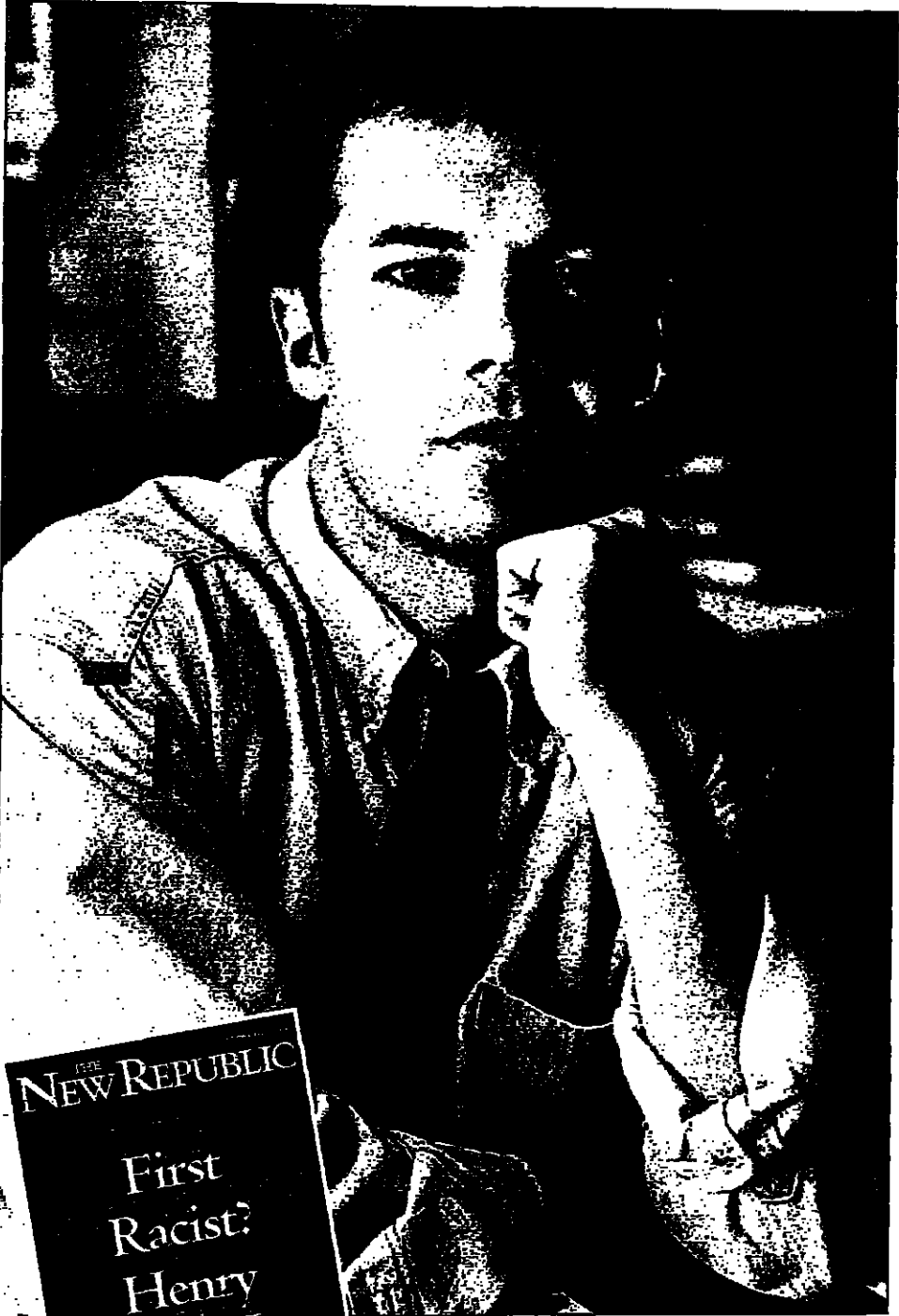
Simon Jenkins has much to crow about, for he very nearly demolished the prize with his incisive pen. It is not often that a journalist can exercise real power. True, the Orange Prize is a small fish to fry, but we journals like to kick ass from time to time, and he scored. For although the anonymous benefactor gave the prize money, a commercial sponsor was needed to pro-

mote it and pay for administration. The Mitsubishi Pencil Company stepped forward. But the mighty Jenkins of the mighty Thunderer blasted them away: "I wonder if the Mitsubishi Pencil Corporation knows to what unmeritorious cause they have lent their name?" he asked. They took fright and fled. How they must regret it now, cowards with too little lead in their pencils. Now they face a massive sexual harassment case in their US factory, with 700 female claimants, and how they must wish they could point to their sponsorship of a women's prize in defence of their corporate image! But in stepped Orange, the Hong Kong-based telephone company, and it is made of sterner stuff.

The shortlist of six books announced today is richly diverse, with first novels and literary best-sellers. The prize is billed as "a celebration of excellence" and now it needs to establish itself as just that, a worthy sister to France's Prix Femina, and a slap in the face to all this quite disproportionate male indignation.

The publisher's putsch

The exit of a British editor from the helm of an American political weekly had little to do with his having HIV, says Christopher Hitchens



The final cut: Andrew Sullivan's health revelation robbed his enemies of their clarifying moment. Left: a cover from Sullivan's time as editor of 'New Republic'

Not very many moons ago, Andrew Sullivan called Dominic Lawson at the *Spectator*. It was a thumbs-up call. Mr Lawson's celebrated article on the birth of his Down's Syndrome daughter would be running in the *New Republic*. Normally, an editor's say-so in these matters will suffice. But not in this instance and not at this magazine.

Martin Peretz, the proprietor, and Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor, had an icy word with Mr Sullivan. Did he suppose, they inquired, that the *New Republic* would be running an article, on any subject, by the man who had published William Cash's little effort on the domination of Hollywood by the Jews? If he did, he was most gravely mistaken.

This illuminates both the immediate question of Sullivan's departure and what might be termed the sub-text of office politics. Nobody really edits the *New Republic* except Martin Peretz, who does so by the grace of his wife's large fortune. (Ann Peretz is the heiress to the Singer sewing machine empire.) And Andrew Sullivan is not the first *lucum tenens* to have made this discovery. This week's "resignation" is the culmination of a long series of disputes and misunderstandings. But it is also the latest illustration of an old tension.

Lawson apart, Sullivan did not endear himself to his superiors by letting the magazine in for two very exhausting lawsuits. Libel suits are not as common, or as easy to bring, in the United States as they are in England. But if you call an innocent man a convicted felon, or a powerful politician a mobster, you can still expect trouble. *The New Republic* is being sued by a senior member of Mayor Marion Barry's entourage and by the leading Cuban-American Jorge

Mas Canosa. In both instances, the libelous allegation resulted from editorial carelessness. The word "mobster" was not in the original article, but was put on the cover without the knowledge of the author. The allegation of felony conviction was made by Ruth Shalit, who, due to accusations of plagiarism for a different article, was given a temporary "leave of absence" a short while ago, after being protected by Mr Sullivan for longer than some thought prudent.

Behind this is what I think of as a quarrel between the Old and New Testaments. Peretz and especially Wieseltier are

and when he went "serious" (as when he decided to publish Charles Murray's lucubrations on the IQ deficit of black Americans), he offended a lot of people. His departure was supposed to indicate a return to seriousness, so that when he finessed the announcement by wedding it to his revelation about being HIV positive, he robbed his enemies on the magazine of their clarifying moment. Only this, I think, can explain the extraordinary sourness of Leon Wieseltier's riposte.

"I wish Andrew a long and fruitful life," he said. "But he's changing the subject. The prob-

The magazine has lost its standing and started looking for a 'formula'

committed Zionists, committed conservative Democrats and given to taking a stern moral tone which their detractors find pompous and absurd. (Their ideal politician is their mutual friend Albert Gore, who might be described as Andrew Sullivan's polar opposite in point of temperament.) Sullivan, despite his allegedly Oakeshotian Toryism, is a playful and ironic type of no fixed abode, more inclined to stress compassion and forgiveness than to call down a Jeremiah. He is of the flighty Catholic reactionary generation of what I call "Brideshead Regurgitated".

Sullivan made the magazine a sort of style section for the light of heart and light of mind

lems around this office were not medical problems. He was responsible for an extraordinary amount of professional and personal unhappiness. In his little farewell address, he said he feels unburdened. Well, he's not alone.

Now, I'm very much against people speaking pieties on occasions such as this. But Sullivan has actually won some admiration around town for his fortitude under the threat of Aids and the most often-heard view as I write is that Wieseltier missed a perfectly good chance of keeping his mouth shut.

Does this episode have any implications beyond itself? A couple of years ago, Sullivan showed every promise of being

a star. He had an attractive personality, youth on his side and though he had sub-Chestertonian politics, he had shown that he could write with wit as well as conviction. Are we witnessing a backlash against pretty Brit journalists with flair and dash? I can think of a number of aspiring scribbles who were pondering this question with no little anxiety as they perused their newspapers over the weekend, but I don't believe the fall-out will be that tremendous.

For one thing, I don't believe that it will lead to Sullivan's eclipse. He says he shouted "free at last" to himself as he exited the office and, though it's true that he was pushed, he was also going anyway. He will continue to be in demand, and will spend the next few days fending off all sorts of offers. He's also got himself a decent book contract. In time, his editorial gaffes will fade. (It may not have been all that smart to run Camille Paglia—Sullivan's favourite essayist on almost all matters—as a cover-writer on Hillary Clinton with the title "Ice Queen/Drug Queen". At the opening of the Clinton campaign, the *New Republic* was much too uncritical of the Lit-

tle Rockers. Now it's critical, but in too flippant a fashion.)

I should declare my interest and say that for the past 14 years I have been a columnist for the *Atlantic*, which has been the *New Republic's* long-time rival. These same years have roughly coincided with the Peretz epoch. A magazine once associated with the names of Edmund Wilson and Walter Lippman—high priests of American sourness and exalted liberalism—has become the victim of the fluctuating caprice of a man with a bonnet full of bees. Finding a new editor and favourite, Peretz swings between being at his feet and at his throat. Who will be bold enough to work as the next front man for such a proprietor?

Even five years ago, such a storm at the *New Republic* would have been big stuff all over Washington. The big story now is that there is no big story. The magazine has lost its standing and has started looking for a "formula". Its internal disputes are no longer ideological but emotional. Its office gossip is tawdry. Its better writers, such as Michael Kinsley, have gone elsewhere and I know of more than one senior contributor who contemplates doing the same. Last week was a milestone in the decline of a magazine, not of the health of an editor.

The author writes the 'Fin de Siècle' column for 'Vanity Fair'.

Where will we be in 2010? Ask the experts

Futurology has turned itself into a thriving, respectable profession, says Sheena McDonald

Noriko Hama is confident in her forecast: no European Union, no single currency. Fifteen years from now the tormented writings of Euro-skeptics, realists and phillies, all attempting to persuade us, White Queen-like, to believe the unbelievable before breakfast, courtesy of Humphrys and Naughtie, will seem as distant a likelihood as Chamberlain's piece of paper now seems to us. This morning Ms Hama will upset late breakfasters with her controversial but clear-eyed view of the future of Europe.

Futurologists are a cheerful bunch. Their day has come. As the technocrats have claimed their seat at the head of the commerce and development hierarchies, so the futurologists graciously accept society's belated acknowledgement of their role—as prophets for a secular age. You won't find their writings on the *New Age*/larot/Massage shelf any longer. Their disciplines now accept their expertise, and pay well for it. Even their business cards confidently claim the title, without fear of smirk or raised eyebrow.

But what are the credentials of this end-of-millennium elite? And how did the science of futurology graduate from the wacky Californian corner to represent a badge of honour?

The dignifying of futurology ironically owes more to superstition than deliberation, and the title of our radio series—*Beyond the Millennium*—shamelessly acknowledges that fact. It's illogical, it's arbitrary—but the anniversary of the supposed birthdate of one Jesus, in occupied Palestine

2,000 years ago, has undoubtedly encouraged interest in the focused and specific concerns of those men and women who plot the paths ahead—and who, for all their empirically-based calculations, will take great care to factor in human emotions when they make their predictions.

The producers, Clare Csonka and Chris Stone, and I invited six men and women who earn their living making the unknown future knowable to justify their predictions for the year 2010/11. Why 15 years ahead?

'Men, too, will be able to explore their identities and live fuller lives'

Because it's long enough for profound change to be a new norm, but also for life as we know it to have retained a nostalgic foothold. Fifteen years ago the icy security of the Cold War seemed unbreachably intact. The Prince of Wales had finally tracked down his virgin-bride.

We were not looking for household names. But if Noriko Hama, Clem Bezold, Sadie Plant, Ian Pearson, Linda Grattan and Olara Uunu have correctly calculated the probabilities, risks and likelihood in their respective fields, they will be. And those fields are precise—in this first series we were looking at Europe, health care, social and sexual rela-

tions, telecommunications and their impact, work and labour, and global power relations.

What we were looking for was certainty, if not categorical conviction. What our futurologists have in common is an authority rooted in expertise, and a willingness—they would say a duty—to call it as they see it. Unlike a similar interview series I recorded last summer for Channel 4, *The Vision Thing*, these thinkers do not claim to be visionaries, in the sense that they are not hired (by those whose investments depend on second-guessing the future) to indulge their idealism, or indeed their pessimism.

Whether they have indulged themselves you may judge, and we shall see—they can't all be right. If there isn't yet a collective noun for futurologists, may I suggest a "contradiction"? Sadie Plant, research fellow in philosophy at Warwick University, foresees a technology-driven liberation from centuries-old patriarchal structures. For the first time in the history of humanity, women will be able to be themselves. What will that mean? "We don't know. Women have never been able to be themselves. Like machines, they've been the tools of men. Now women and machines will be autonomous—and men, too, will be able to explore their identities and live fuller, more expansive lives."

Will they want to? Clearly a foolish question. Futurologists are not staring from here. They've pitched their responses 15 years forward. "We're looking at mutations—the collapse of the old means of identity. As we lose our obsession with sex, then

the possibility of using that for purposes of identification will itself go. We will not only lose our moral sense, but also our sense of self." Won't we miss the old days? "What we'll miss is the homogeneous world of fixed procedures, policed lives..." I begin to understand, and like what I hear. The glass ceiling? "Irrelevant—it will disappear, not because women have achieved equality, but because management positions and political life will not be where it's at."

I turn to Linda Grattan. As pro-

'This is about mutations—the collapse of the old means of identity'

fessor of organisational behaviour at the London Business School, she sees things very differently. In 15 years' time, she sees no fundamental change in our sense of self in the world of work, except perhaps a diminishing confidence. She identifies critical and massive shortcomings in UK plc's CV—inadequate language skills, IT skills and networking skills will leave Britain gasping on the grid as our partners and competitors surge ahead—not least because our employment relations are still old-fashioned.

Olara Uunu is the Ugandan-born director of the International Peace Academy in New York. She raises a

different new reality. "For the first time in human history we will see the rise of a group of states not drawn from European stock. Up until now non-European people were brought to the table by courtesy. Now we see decolonisation via merit and performance. The West must be prepared to accept non-European partners, who do not come from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, who have brown skin. And this will have a positive effect on other parts of the previously colonised world. If Asia can do it—why not us?" And women? Ah—globally, Sadie Plant's future may take a little longer to materialise.

I begin to understand that futurologists are only human. However objective their analysis, they are reassuringly vulnerable to their personal hopes and fears. When Sadie Plant explains that real knowledge and understanding of ourselves, untrammelled by gender-identity, is part of the necessary protection against fascism, I hear the echo of the traditional voice in the wilderness. And when she warns of the "danger of softer, gentler attempts to reimpose order", the evangelist walks with the seer.

And what about the futurologists themselves? Beyond the millennium, will their own job security—a neat paradox of our uncertain times—have deteriorated, as the messengers suffer the traditional fate, whether proved right or wrong?

'Beyond the Millennium' is broadcast on BBC Radio 4, Mondays, 8.45-9am, from 15 April for six weeks.

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obituaries / gazette

George Mackay Brown

Tomorrow is the feast day of St Magnus, the 12th-century martyr, patron saint of Orkney, and subject of the novel, *Magnus*, that the Orcadian poet and story-teller George Mackay Brown considered his best work. It would have given Brown quiet satisfaction that this was the day on which he would finally be laid to rest.

Tomorrow afternoon, after a funeral mass in St Magnus's Cathedral, Kirkwall, he will be buried in a kirkyard he loved from boyhood, looking out across the Atlantic, a mile from the seaport of Stromness where he was born 74 years ago and which he rarely left.

So strong was Brown's love of Orkney, and dislike of travel, that he only once visited England, in 1989. He studied at Newbattle Abbey, outside Edinburgh, under the poet Edwin Muir in the late 1950s, but while he later claimed this was the happiest time of his life, it was clear to him at the end of it that he must return to Orkney. Offered a travelling scholarship in 1968 by the Society of Authors, he refused to go further than Ireland, where he stayed as a guest of his friend and admirer Seamus Heaney. Shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1994, he refused to come to London for the prize-winners' dinner.

While Brown stayed put, however, his writing travelled for him, as Muir, introducing Brown's first book of poems, *The Storm*, in 1954, predicted that it would: "reading these poems," he wrote, "I am impressed... by something which I can only call grace. Grace is what breathes warmth into beauty and tenderness into comedy; it is in a sense the crowning gift, for without it beauty would be cold and comedy heartless." Generations of schoolchildren studied, as part of their Higher syllabus, Brown's novel *Greenoe* (1972), in which he traces with deep affection and dark foreboding a week in the life of an Orkney fishing community. *Greenoe* is shortly to be made into a film. His work has been translated into numerous languages, including Polish, Hebrew and Japanese, and the OBE which followed the publication of *Magnus* (1973), was succeeded by a stream of literary prizes and honours. Over 20 of Brown's works have been set to music by the composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, whose move to Orkney was largely inspired by his meeting Brown and reading his collection of essays *An Orkney Tapestry* (1969).

Far from being a constraint, Brown's stability added to the scope and strength of his work. His rootedness fitted into a set of firmly held beliefs about poets and their true task. "Writers," he once commented, "should know the people they are writing about over several generations. There are stories attached not only to men and women, but to their grandparents in this way, legends take over from gossip." In the Orkney islands, meanwhile, he found what he described as "a microcosm of all the world. Orkney has been continuously lived in for about 6,000 years and the layers of cultures and races are



The 'interrogation of silence': Brown in the harbour at Stromness, Orkney

Photograph: Christopher Barker

inescapable and unavoidable wherever you go. There are stories in the air here. If I lived to be 500, there would still be more to write."

By drawing his boundaries tightly around himself Brown freed his imagination to sweep through time and space, so that he could write as convincingly about the medieval earls of Orkney as the shopkeepers of 20th-century Stromness, and as evocatively about Nazi Germany or first-century Palestine as about Orkney. "For all his seeming isolation," Ted Hughes once commented, "Brown is as connected to the world as any of us. He has retreated to a point where he can see the world in an internal reflection, a very clear and penetrating simplification that he could never have achieved in the midst of the hurly-burly." "He transforms everything," said Seamus Heaney, "by passing it through

the eye of the needle of Orkney."

In his modest former council house in Stromness, Brown worked with quiet, unstinting discipline. Six days a week, he would sit in his kitchen from 9am until 1pm, writing with a ball-point pen on blocks of Basildon Bond paper, leaning on the same Formica surface at which he ate his breakfast, his back to the window to avoid distraction. One whole day each week he set aside for replying to the letters that poured in to him from all over the world. The afternoons he spent in a large rocking chair, beside a coal fire kept burning in all weathers. He read widely, and rather surprisingly – Martin Amis was one of his favourite modern authors – but was equally happy just to sit and think. He defined the poet's true task as the "interrogation of silence" and claimed that he had had the

most powerful experiences of his life sitting by his fire, alone.

Anything but gregarious, Brown deterred casual visitors by pinning a small note to his front door each morning: "Working all day. GMB". Those who met him, however, were struck by his courtesy, canny kindness, and deep humility. He had no appetite for fame. A well-made poem, he would often say, was like a well-made chair: writing was a craft. Nothing delighted him more than to be mistaken for a local fisherman. In part, this humility was inherited from his father, the Stromness tailor and postman who taught his six children to beware pretension. "My father would often say to us children, 'Don't get above yourself, whatever happens', and he would quote Bunyan. He said: 'It is down need fear no fall / He that is low no pride.'" But despite his warm hu-

mour, however, one sensed an underlying sadness. Especially in the last few years of his life, Brown suffered from bouts of depression so acute that he sometimes longed for oblivion. At the same time, however, he was sustained by a steadfast religious faith. Brought up a Presbyterian, he became in 1961 – almost uniquely for an Orcadian – a Roman Catholic. In some of his most masterly writing, in a voice that was unmistakably his own, he explores Christianity and the way prehistory prepared its path. In the penultimate chapter of *Magnus*, as a prelude to St Magnus's martyrdom, he reflects on the role that sacrifice has played in the history of mankind.

"It seemed to even the most primitive people," he writes, "that they and the animals that yielded them food and clothing had not come together by blind accident, but were parts of a

three-fold relationship: as god-man-animal." The earliest people honoured their gods by "the broken flesh and spilled blood" of their animals; then came the discovery of bread. "Who first tore long wounds in the earth and sowed in it the seeds of wild corn nobody knows, but it was one of the great discoveries... We know the name of the first priest who offered bread and wine on the altar instead of a slain beast: Melchizedek the Israelite. This was a thrilling moment in the spiritual history of mankind. Nor was the pattern altered in the concert of god and man and animals: for the earth had to be wounded in order to contain the seed and the ripening corn drew its sustenance from the same deep sources that nourished the animals." So far, the god had remained "an enigma, a remote unseen mystery", but in the fullness of time he came to the altar-stone, "himself the deity and the priest and the victim".

"That," Brown writes, "was the one, only, central sacrifice of history... All previous rituals had been a foreshadowing of this: all subsequent rituals a re-enactment. The fires at the centre of the earth, the sun above, all divine essences and ecstasies came to this silence at last – a circle of bread and a cup of wine on an altar."

Brown practised his faith quietly, but he set out his convictions with increasing authority and certainty as he moved into his old age. In *Beside the Ocean of Time* (1994), his last novel, he achieved such a magisterial summing-up of the purpose and meaning of man's life that it is difficult to imagine how he could have followed it. His last collection of poetry, *Following a Lark*, to be published next month, he characterises as poems "written mainly in praise of the light", the light to which Orcadians look forward at the return of each spring, but also, he adds importantly and with characteristic modesty, "to glorify in a small way the light behind the light". In the final poem, "A Work for Poets", Brown seems to sign his own epitaph, and to hand to a new generation.

To have carved on the days of our vanity

A sun
A ship
A cornstalk

Also a few marks
From an ancient forgotten time
A child may read

That not far from the stone
A well
Might open for wayfarers

Here is a work for poets –
Carve the runes
Then be content with silence

Maggie Farham

George Mackay Brown, poet and novelist: born Stromness, Orkney 17 October 1921; OBE 1974; books include *The Storm* 1954, *Loaves and Fishes* 1959, *The Year of the Whale* 1965, *Fishermen with Ploughs* 1971, *Greenoe* 1972, *Magnus* 1973, *Winterfolk* 1976, *Time in a Red Coat* 1984, *The Wreck of the Archangel* 1989, *Selected Poems 1954-1983* 1991, *Vinland* 1992, *Beside the Ocean of Time* 1994, *Winter Tales* 1995; died Kirkwall, Orkney 13 April 1996.

Marthe Robert

The appearance of a new book by Marthe Robert was always a rare and exciting event for me. Rare, because she published infrequently and wrote essays of exemplary brilliance: exciting because she defended many of the writers I most admired – Heinrich von Kleist, Franz Kafka, Robert Walser, Georg Büchner, Gustave Flaubert, Antonin Artaud.

Her works were illuminating psychological studies of writers who were beyond the pale, the mad, the humiliated and the neglected in the fields of normal literary history.

Kafka was her special love. She translated his works with assured technique and tender care for his very personal voice. Her book *Seul comme Franz Kafka* (1968) helped sweep away prejudices attached to his work, and rejected the usual laboured analysis of his "symbolism" to reveal his tragic sense of humour, his peculiar irony and his struggle to make a life for himself through the saving grace of a unique individual vision.

She shows Kafka's art as a continual urge to remain alive to his "difference". He wrote: "The writer is the scapegoat of humanity, who grants his fellow-men an almost innocent enjoyment of sin." The price the outcast creator pays is isolation, a loneliness that is the condition of his strivings for self-expression. Marthe Robert begins her study with two quotations. The first comes from Kafka's conversations with a not always very reliable witness, the student Gustav Janouch, who asks him: "Are you then so very much alone?" Kafka just nods. "Like Kaspar Hauser?" Kafka laughs: "Much worse than that. I am alone... like Franz Kafka." He also said: "One does not reach one's full development until after death, when one is all alone."

I bought my first book by Marthe Robert in 1955, a deeply sympathetic study of Heinrich von Kleist. *Un homme inexplicable* – a title inexpressible in English, but perhaps "An Inexplicable Man", a man beyond words, expresses something of the general puzzlement most of his critics displayed on their encounters with his unclassified genius.

This revolutionary analysis of Kleist's work and character was to help me immeasurably in my translations of such diverse works as his drama *The Prince of Homburg*, his novel *Michael Kohlhaas* and his short stories. Robert proved to me that they and his other writings were all of a piece, despite their differences. Her book was not equalled until the publication in 1989 of Hans Dieter Zimmermann's controversial biography, *Kleist, die Liebe und der Tod* ("Kleist, Love and Death").

Marthe Robert was largely self-taught in psychiatry; her wide reading in the subject enabled her to estimate at their true value what ordinary literary critics could only see as defects in Kleist's work and personality, demonstrating that it was precisely these "defects" that made his work great. Other critics, trying to "see the whole man" missed the pathetic incompleteness that Robert perceived as essential to "outsider art". It is significant that she ended her book with a

chapter on Kleist by the Swiss genius, Robert Walser, another poet of the incomplete and the indefinable, a wryly comic portrait of failure and inadaptation who spent the last 30 years of his life in psychiatric hospitals. The fate of such visionaries is a profound criticism of a civilisation that cannot accommodate them and rejects their disturbing exceptions to the norm. Kafka read Robert Walser. He also read Freud.

That self-imposed solitude is the only refuge from personal hell few have understood as well as Marthe Robert. Helped by her close friend the dramatist of the absurd, Arthur Adamov, with whom she translated and adapted for the stage the plays of Georg Büchner, she worked to obtain the release of Antonin Artaud from the madhouse. She and Adamov are among a host of famous writers who contributed to the anthology *Artaud Vivant* (1980). They include tributes to this figure of immense literary and dramatic stature by early admirers like Gide, Colette and Cocteau, extending to the present day's posthumous appreciation by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jerzy Grotowski, Susan Sontag and many more.

Another great man who influenced Marthe Robert's life and writings was Sigmund Freud, about whom she wrote an important work, *La Révolution psychiatrique* (1968). This was the direct outcome of a series of radio talks she gave, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Freud*, in which she was guided by Michel Foucault.

She was married to the psychoanalyst Michel de M'Uzan, though she never went through complete analysis herself. There was no Freudian fanaticism in her admiration for the Master, and she never used forbidding psychological jargon, for she was totally undogmatic in her approach to psychiatry. In a later work, *Le Puits de Babel* (1987), she writes with unusual acerbity concerning writers who err in these respects. Her unorthodox views earned her some enemies. Sartre condemned her linking of Flaubert and Kafka (not "engage" enough), while he himself produced an unreadable elephant of a book on Flaubert in *L'Idiot de la famille* (1971). Robert protested against the deformations of Freud's ideas by biographers, and deplored "the stubborn anti-Freudian" Vladimir Nabokov's definition of Freud as "the Viennese charlatan".

In her last published book, *La Traversée littéraire* (1994), Marthe Robert writes of her own "literary passage" through a life spent investigating and illuminating the secrets of artistic creation. She was indeed one of the *grandes dames* of contemporary literature, and received many awards, including the Grand Prix National des Lettres in 1995. But dismayed by the publishing world that increasingly treats literary works like any other perishable commodity, with an ominously early sell-by date, she fell silent. Like her translation, she was irreplaceable.

James Kirkup

Marthe Robert, essayist and translator: born Paris 25 March 1914; married Michel de M'Uzan; died Paris 12 April 1996.

Berkely Mather

Berkely Mather wrote full-blooded adventure stories. The adventure story writer – ancient (at any rate, early-20th century) as well as modern – has always had to labour under the curse of the *Boys' Own Paper*. Whatever acute intelligence (it is rarely she: Clare Francis is an honourable exception) may bring to bear on his theme, whatever descriptive powers he may possess, whatever arcane tit-bits he may unearth, his story will in the end be snuffed under "tipping yarns" to be filed under "provincial literary editors."

To be sure, many (verging on countless) adventure-story writers deserve this fate. Quite a few – Ralph Hammond, Ian, Ernest K. Gann, Arthur D. Howden Smith, C.S. Forester, Duncan Kyle, one or two others – don't. Berkely Mather certainly didn't. His novels, screenplays, television plays and radio

scripts contained all the ingredients any competent hack can come up with – action, plot, unflagging pace and exotic locations – yet are far from being mere "shooty-bang" juvenilia.

Berkely Mather was the pseudonym of John Evan Weston-Davies, a career soldier who was born in Gloucester in 1909. The family emigrated to Australia before the First World War (in which Mather lost two of his elder brothers), and Mather was educated there, at high school and Sydney University, where he read Medicine, the family profession.

To escape a suffocating fate, Mather took off on a world tour, travelling mainly steerage, before ending up in England in the depths of the post-Wall Street Crash Depression. He had no career and no qualifications. He enlisted in the Royal Horse Artillery, failed to gain a commission, and, in desperation, ap-

plied to join the Indian Army. It was the saving of him.

From 1934 through to Independence in 1947, he rose through the ranks, becoming a sergeant at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, getting sent to Iraq, serving under Slim, and ending the war as an acting Lieutenant-colonel (who was, moreover, mentioned in despatches). After Independence he rejoined the British Army, serving in the Royal Artillery until he retired in 1959.

By then, as Dervish Mather, he was already an established writer. His earliest stories had appeared in *The Bystander* and other glossy society weeklies in London before the Second World War. In the early 1950s, while still in the army, he had tried his hand at a radio play, *Southern Channel*, as well as one for the new medium of television, *The Fast Buck*. Both were accepted.

In the mid-Fifties he created his first TV series (an early example of the genre) in *Tales From Soho*, which was produced by Tony Richardson. It featured as one of its main characters Inspector Charlesworth (played by the lanky and mildly lugubrious John Welsh) whom Mather later resurrected (in the stouter form of the actor Wensley Pithey) in a series which lasted into the 1960s.

Another series, *Geth Straker*, concerning the exploits of a piratical Canadian master mariner, ran for a while on the wireless, before appearing in book form in 1962. Mather also began selling stories to *John Bull* and the London evening papers, all three of which (*Star*, *Evening Standard* and *Evening News*) were greedy for well-crafted and exciting short fiction of the kind Mather could supply with comparative ease.

His first novel, *The Achilles*

Affair (1959), was a minor best-seller. His second, the excellent *The Pass Beyond Kashmir* (1960), was reviewed enthusiastically by Ian Fleming, who suggested that Mather should write the script for the first James Bond film, *Dr No*. In fact a script was already in existence, and Mather lightened it considerably, judiciously injecting a certain amount of camp satire into the Bond character. In later films, and under other writers, this was exaggerated enormously. Although offered a percentage of the take for his work on the script, Mather disastrously opted for a flat fee.

In later years a leaning towards the historical turned him in the direction of the family saga, his final three novels – *The Pagoda Tree* (1979), *Midnight Gun* (1981) and *How of the Dog* (1982) – forming a superb trilogy featuring the fortunes, and misfortunes, of a family in the



Mather: full-blooded adventures

Near and Far East from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th. There was absolutely nothing of the *Boys' Own Paper* about it.

Jack Adrian

John Evan ("Jasper") Weston-Davies (Berkely Mather), writer: born Gloucester 25 February 1909; married 1938 Kay Jones (died 1991; two sons and one daughter deceased) died 7 April 1996.

Peter Hollinson

I would like to correct a minor factual error in your obituary of Peter Hollinson. [by Tony Heath, 12 April 1996] writes John Hardman. His first employment was indeed Tiltorsons, owners and publishers of the *Bolton Evening News*, but he began his newspaper career as a trainee on their weekly publication *The Eccles Journal* in the Lancashire town of his birth.

His entry into journalism may have been partly inspired by his father Harry Hollinson, a Second World War fighter pilot who did a nice line in cartoon space travel in the *Lion Annual*. I knew Peter well as a young man; we were choristers in the local parish church choir

and members of various youth organisations in the town. Even then, he had a reputation for perceptive, and usually irreverent, observations about extracurricular activities of our fellow parishioners. I recall that a notorious choir, once threatened to take a horsewhip to him in the church vestry! In his youth Peter was a delightful, amusing and highly entertaining companion, with an impressive array of rock star impersonations and of wretched showcases following "cultural" skirmishes with his younger brother. It is no surprise that he was so successful in his chosen career and devastating that it was cut so short.

Robert Anderson, US diplomat, died Virginia 5 April, aged 74. US Ambassador to Benin, Morocco and the Dominican Republic, Spokesman for the State Department under Henry Kissinger's office as Secretary of State 1973-77.

public, Spokesman for the State Department under Henry Kissinger's office as Secretary of State 1973-77.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

MAYNE: Edward Adrian (Red), peacefully at his home in Guildford, on 12 April 1996. Devoted husband of the late Mary, father of Edward and Nicholas. Funeral service to take place at Guildford Crematorium on Monday 22 April 1996. Family flowers only, but donations, in lieu of floral tributes, for the RNLI can be sent to Robert Ayling Funeral Services, 25 South Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6NY. Telephone 01483 567333.

Forthcoming marriages

Capt W. R. E. Barnes Yallowley and Miss E. K. Kendon
The engagement is announced between William, of The Queen's Royal Hussars, younger son of Mr and Mrs Hugh Barnes Yallowley, of Fife, East Sussex, and Emily, daughter of Mr David Kendon, of Falmouth, East Sussex, and of the late Mrs Caroline Kendon.

Birthdays

Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, novelist, 56; Dame Jocelyn Barrow, former deputy chairman, Broadcasting Standards Council, 67; Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, BBC National Governor for Northern Ireland, 65; Group Capt David Bolton, former

director, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 64; Sir Michael Bond, Professor of Psychological Medicine, Glasgow University, 60; Sir Adrian Cadbury, a director of the Bank of England, 67; Mr Tony Calvert, founder of the Terrence Higgins Trust, 40; Miss Claudia Cardinale, actress, 58; Mr Dave Edmunds, rock guitarist, 52; Sir Richard Evans, former diplomat, 68; Miss Samantha Fox, dancer and model, 30; Lord Gerard, former MP, 71; Mr Patrick Gilman, chairman, Standard Chartered plc, 65; Mr John Gregory, dancer and writer, 82; Lord Grey of Naunton, former Chancellor, Ulster University, 80; Mr John Grigg, historian, 72; Sir David Keene, High Court judge, 56; Sir Hugh Laddie, High Court judge, 50; Sir Neville

Marriner, conductor, 72; Professor Charles Marsden, neurologist, 84; Sir Peter Menzies, former chairman, Electricity Council, 84; Earl Russell, historian, 79; Sir Maurice Struck, former Rector, Lincoln College, Oxford, 70; Sir Leslie Smith, former chairman, BOC Group, 77; Mr Godfrey Stanford, former Master, St Cross College, Oxford, 78; Miss Emma Thompson, actress, 37; Miss Meriel Trevor, novelist and biographer, 77; Dr Richard von Weizsäcker, President of Germany, 76; Sir Douglas Wass, chairman, Equity & Law Life Assurance Society, 75; Mr Marty Wilde, rock singer and composer, 57.

Anniversaries

Births Nank, founder of the Sikhs,

1707: William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, military commander, 1711; Sir James Clark Ross, polar explorer, 1800; Pierre-Ernest Theodore Rousseau, painter, 1812; Benjamin Jowett, theologian and classical scholar, 1817; Henry James, novelist, 1843; William Bliss Carman, poet, 1861; Johannes Stark, physicist, 1874; Bessie Smith, blues singer, 1894; Deaths: Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson-Le Normand d'Etolles, Marquise de Pompadour, mistress of King Louis XV, 1764; Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the US, from shot, 1865; Matthew Arnold, educationalist and poet, 1888; Father Damien (Joseph Damien de Veuster), missionary, 1889; John Singer Sargent, portrait painter, 1925; Jean-Paul Sartre, philosopher

and writer, 1980; Arthur Lowe, actor, 1982; Tommy Cooper, comedian, 1984. On this day: the Passion According to St Matthew by Johann Sebastian Bach, was first performed, St Thomas's, Leipzig, 1729; Dr Samuel Johnson published his *Dictionary*, 1755; the Duchess of Kingston was found guilty of bigamy, 1776; the Bank of England issued the first five-pound note, 1793; the White Star Line liner sank on her maiden voyage after colliding with an iceberg with the loss of 1,513 lives, 1912; insulin was discovered by Sir Frederick Banting with J.R.E. Macleod and Charles H. Best, 1922; US aircraft bombed Libya after American aircraft had been confronted by Libyan machines, 1966; 95 Liverpool football fans were crushed to death

in the stand at Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield, 1989. Today is Easter Eve and the Feast Day of Saints Anastasia and Basilissa, St Huma or Huva, St Patern or Padarn of Wales and St Ruadhan.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museum: Eva White, "Emigré designers in Britain from the 1930s", 2.30pm.

Appointments

Mr Andrew Motson, Professor of Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, to be Chairman of the Literature Advisory Panel of the Arts Council of England.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duchess of Gloucester attends a reception in aid of the Progressive Society, at Palsy (PSP Europe) Association, the Grosvenor House Hotel, London W1.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mount the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

15/4/96

business

The bulls and the bears fight it out in a bewildered marketplace

The yawning gap between the bulls and the bears seems to be widening. It does, of course, take many views to make a market - any market - but the differing advice coming from stock market strategists must make the average investor blink in bewilderment.

Last week's display suggested that the decoupling from New York was growing more pronounced with Footsie remaining within hailing distance of its peak and the supporting FT-SE 250 index resolutely stalling to new peaks, crossing 4,400 points for the first time.

This week's results do not feature many big guns and, therefore, unlikely to have much impact on the direction of the market.

Government figures, including industrial production and inflation, could have a much greater influence, so could interest rates.

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell think the improving inflation background should be underlined by falls in producer and retail prices but a significant PSBR overshoot could offset any relief.

Although US interest rates seem destined to move higher there is still a strong possibility the Bundesbank, meeting on Thursday, could feel obliged to lower rates to encourage the faltering German economy.

At the moment the guessing is that UK rates will remain unchanged but it is worth noting that the futures market is pointing to 8 per cent base rates by the end of next year.

Political considerations loom large although even if the Tory majority evaporates, the market is taking the view that John Major will hang on as long as he can, probably going to the polls in next spring. As Simon Briscoe at Nikko, the Japanese investment house, says:

"The loss of a parliamentary majority will not necessarily lead to the fall of the Government. The economy will be a key part of the election campaign and Major will want to deliver tax cuts (detailed in the November Budget and paid in April next year) before the election."

Shares have made a confident start to the second quarter although Government stocks remain depressed. Richard Jeffery at Charterhouse Tilney believes the current quarter will be the most active of the year.

With institutional cash flow remaining healthy and company profit forecasts being raised he believes there is a strong possibility Footsie could hit 4,000.

In the short term, Wall Street may remain a hindrance but any resulting weakness in the UK would provide an attractive opportunity to raise weightings, he says.



STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

His year-end Footsie target is 4,000, with 4,400 pencilled in for 1997.

Paul Walton and Edmund Shing, economists at Goldman Sachs, the US house, are on a different wavelength. They believe Footsie will not move into new high ground "for a long time". Shares, they say, are "busy going nowhere" and suggest a year-end Footsie level of 3,400; they also expect a similar figure in the middle of next year.

The rather thin list of results this week is dominated by retailers with Tesco, reporting to-morrow, holding centre stage. The superstores group should manage year's figures of

£577m, a 14 per cent gain. But as NatWest Securities point out, a three-year revival, that has seen Tesco out-retail its arch rival J Sainsbury and attaining a double digit earnings-per-share growth, could be over.

"Prospects now appear significantly more pedestrian", say NatWest men Tony MacNeary and Mike Dennis.

Like other analysts they lowered their Tesco profit forecasts earlier this year. The fierce supermarket price war, with Sainsbury fighting back, has put intense pressure on margins.

Laura Ashley, the quintessentially English clothing and furnishing chain is being restructured and restored by

American Am Iverson who made her reputation at Storehouse.

Its shares have already responded to what appears to be her sure touch and are riding on their 12 month high. At 157p they are discounting much of any revival; indeed they are looking two years ahead.

So this week's results will be looked at as a further indication whether the Iverson magic is working. Anything short of profits of £7m, an 84 per cent advance on the previous year, will be regarded as disappointing.

John Coleman, new chief executive of struggling House of Fraser, will not have to explain the department stores dismal performance. He does not get his feet under the desk until later this month so should be no more than an interested onlooker when results are announced on Thursday. However, the figures will underline the scale of the task he faces.

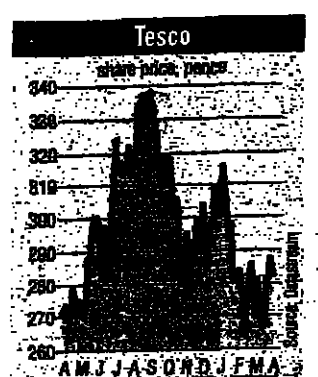
The market is well prepared for a profit slump. Around £16m is the figure most are expecting - a ragged retreat from the £36.5m achieved in the previous year.

The appointment of Mr Coleman disappointed a number of market watchers. Restoring House of Fraser's fortunes will be difficult and he will find meeting the £32m projections for the current year a demanding task.

The Rack, the successful niche retailer, is likely to produce profits of £8.1m against £7.4m, with its associate French company proving something of a drag. Other retailers to the fore this week include Signet, which could have more information about disposals on Wednesday, and ERA, the cameras and toys chain, which could produce profits of £1.8m on Thursday.

RMC is the other big player to report this week. It has suffered from the German economic downturn but foreign exchange movements could compensate for what at best will be flat German contribution.

It should produce profits of £321m against £283.3m on Thursday. The shares are below the 1,140p hit last year despite Friday's jump.



Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Alcoholic Beverages	Price	Chg	Food	Price	Chg
Guinness	1.10	+0.05	Asda	1.10	+0.05
Heineken	1.10	+0.05	Waitrose	1.10	+0.05
Stout	1.10	+0.05	John Lewis	1.10	+0.05
Wolfe	1.10	+0.05	Debenhams	1.10	+0.05

Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Banks, Merchant	Price	Chg	Insurance	Price	Chg
Barclays	1.10	+0.05	Aviva	1.10	+0.05
HSBC	1.10	+0.05	Prudential	1.10	+0.05
London & Lancashire	1.10	+0.05	Legal & General	1.10	+0.05

Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Banks, Retail	Price	Chg	Media	Price	Chg
ABN-Amro	1.10	+0.05	News Corp	1.10	+0.05
Bank of America	1.10	+0.05	Time Warner	1.10	+0.05
Bank of Scotland	1.10	+0.05	Vodafone	1.10	+0.05

Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Breweries, Pubs & Rest	Price	Chg	Telecommunications	Price	Chg
Asahi	1.10	+0.05	BT	1.10	+0.05
Beck's	1.10	+0.05	Telecom	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	Telecom	1.10	+0.05

Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Building/Construction	Price	Chg	Utilities	Price	Chg
Arco	1.10	+0.05	British Gas	1.10	+0.05
Bechtel	1.10	+0.05	Electricity	1.10	+0.05
Bois	1.10	+0.05	Water	1.10	+0.05

Breweries, Pubs & Rest				
32.2	Ascut Ridge	334	0.7	2515
17032	Bass	120	-11	3.7
34.7	Bunacwood	167	-2	10.2
189.2	Claydon	172	+5	24.0
10.2	Compass	543	+6	1656
48.9	Days of	240	+0	22.1
98.0	Fisher Smith	476	+3	18.9
45.6	Gubler Mier	328	+3	11.3

740.5	Greenleaf Gp	550	+9	3.0	16.0	2706	
281.1	Greene King	650	+26	2.7	16.3	2768	6.7
32.8	Greeneview Int	231		3.0	24.8	2226	1.0
40.8	Group One Gtd	216	+12	1.5	22.1	4158	
64.2	Harcis & H	321	-1	3.9	12.0	2893	
104.6	Heidi's	3945		2.0	18.1	2912	3.5
22.4	Imb Business	47	+1				1.7
308.7	Manitex	442	+8	2.1	16.2	3682	
342	Mason T	348	-1	1.1	15.1	3201	
191.7	Meadow	653	-1	2.9	4.0	3710	
ASX	Resonant	51	-5	5.0	8.8	3749	

101.8	Pizza	136	+12	15	23.2	4059	36.2
103.8	Pizza Express	348	+2	0.8	35.8	4069	2
28.9	Ramadan's 4-1	226	-	1.9	34.4	2911	1
157.1	Regent Inc	570	+65	10	30.4	2180	7
0703	Scott-Walker B	894	+77	35	17.9	3941	2
83.7	Ten Cobbley	210	+4.2	1.8	34.1	1944	3.1
332.7	Veau Group	350	+4	4.6	14.5	4392	5
343.0	Westpac NZ	691	+43	12	8.1	1078	3
441.4	Whitehead	712	+102	38	17.6	4485	1
450.0	Wool & Dudley	329	+4	1.9	16.9	4630	1
452.0		339	+4	1.9	16.9	4630	1

15.2	Young Base A	523	-6	3.6	21.2	6953	1.8
27.2	Young Br'w	476	-6	3.9	19.4	4564	

Building/Construction								FTSE
28.2	AMEC	111 1/2	+6 1/2	3.4		1689	1.8	
67.8	Atkins	175	+10	37	11.2	4353	1.4	
10.6	Bovis	25	+1	1.9	18.0	4926	1.5	
30.6	Andrews Grp	260	+2	1.8		1836	3.2	
250.1	Arconic	181	+2	1.8	15.6	1669	1.5	
14.4	Arconic	33	+2	3.6		1270		

Stock	Weekly	Index	Stock	Weekly	Index
Gas Distribution	Price	Chg	Undated	Price	Chg
Asahi	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Beck's	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05

421	CALA	88	+	4.6	101	3034
230	Cambridge	15	-	-	127	4008
373	Care UK	85	+	1.1	176	1610
541	Carlsberg	44	+	2.3	118	2155
571	Casini	91	-	-	-	1248
558	Cassidy	71	+	4.8	-	1248
782	Castle	77	+	2.0	3.2	2276
138	Castle Prop	78	+	8.2	-	2286
624	CEC	48	+	5.9	130	3111
167	Cine Group	170	-	6.8	82	2308
173	Citigroup	194	-	5.4	422	2553

85.8	Greenon MJ	846	+3	2.5	2703
350	Green (E)	51	-	8.6	2764
94.7	Greenon Euro	322	+8	12	2848
23.7	Hammond-Siri	153	+4	2.6	2876
69.9	Hedges & Hill	101	+11	31	2907
7.74	Jackson	68	1.22		3030
	Jane	465	-1		3121
44.5	Lang (A)	317	+16	3.5	3122
43.3	Lang (A)	317	+17	3.5	3121
45.8	Lang Corp 6.4%	114	+8	7.0	2481
2.66	Lang Vt	18	+2	-	3294

512	Maclure's J	205	+x2	3.6	128	3387	
283.5	McIntyre A	183	+5	4.9		3316	21
90.6	McCarthy S	82	+6	2.7	12.8	3318	
302	Morgan Sndall	101	+x3	3.3		4027	3
86.6	Mowson Cans	147	+9	3.6	14.4	3029	53
92.0	Mowlem J	147	+9	3.6		3029	54
228.8	Peatmaron	228	+x9	5.2	17.9	3641	14
23.5	Pearson	113	+1	1.8	11.4		10
142.5	Pilling	141	+1	3.8	18.1	5087	21
333.9	Rake	16	+L			3760	7
84.8	SFG	228	+2	3.6		4640	16.2

42.6	Day Haines	128	+0.9	8.3	12.7	41.78	14.1
31.39	Payco Wides	159	+0.2	2.2	22.8	41.77	14.1
50.1	Tilbury Doug	444	+0	6.4	42.30	44.4	14.1
7.07	Trenchmond	85	+0	4.2	84	42.85	21.8
104	Try Group	17	+0	4.6	7.3	38.97	11.5
12.1	Ulfly Cede	9	+0	5.4	7.0	43.03	22.8
43.0	Midpoint	35	+0	4.9	5.7	44.28	14.1
14.0	Wedge	38	+0	3.8	15.0	44.68	14.1
69.0	Westbury	212	+10	4.8	43.0	45.02	7.8
31.1	Wilson	64	+0	3.4	45.19	45.19	14.1
32.3	Wolpin (C)	188	+3	3.4	45.19	45.19	14.1

47.5	Wilson Bowden	431	+25	2.8	45.18
47.5	Wimpey (G)	158	+17	4.8	46.49
Building Materials					
26.5	Armitex Co	141		8.2	10.3
12.0	B&B Ind	339	+21	3.4	15.7
30.8	Barringer	58		4.0	12.9
10.8	Barton	39	-3	6.9	27.23
17.2	Bellway	364			19.83
17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.7
17.2	Blundell	364	+22.5	4.3	18.55
17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.55
17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.55
17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.55
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17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.55
17.2	Blundell	364		4.3	18.

Asahi	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Beck's	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 10		

Pharmaceuticals	Price	Chg	FTSE 100	Price	Chg
Asahi	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Beck's	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05			

Asahi	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Beck's	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Carlsberg	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
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Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 1000	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 100	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.10	+0.05	FTSE 250	1.10	+0.05
Daikin	1.1				

35.1	Purple Cap	125	+15	36	223	3687
35.1	Purple A	125	+15	36	223	3687
35.4	Purple A	125	+15	36	223	3687
5.00	Shrimp & F	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
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5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp	16	+1	39		78
5.07	Shrimp					

79.5	Albright & Well	169	+4	4.8	5077	53
79.0	Alld Contol	120	-1	2.5	19.9	1551
78.0	Ampco Inc	185	3	1.8	12.2	1894
77.3	BCC	504	+69	37	16.8	1880
75.0	BTP	294	-3	4.7	17.1	1896
74.2	Brent Int	66	-	2.8		1943
73.2	Rob Vint	204	+5	4.9	16.5	2027
69.9	Carnegie (W)	234	+5	4	14.8	2353
68.0	Courtesy	498	+7	4.3	20.5	2280

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THE INDEPENDENT

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Labour attacks Railtrack 'outrage'

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

The Labour Party has reacted angrily to a decision by the Government to make Railtrack pay investors in the privatisation a dividend of almost £70m out of last year's profits.

Clare Short, the shadow transport minister, said yesterday: "This is a monstrous outrage. The Government is shameless, throwing taxpayers' money around in its determination to get Railtrack sold."

Ms Short also, controversially, said Railtrack's bosses were "disreputable and incompetent". She alleged that the management was intent on profiteering from the sale.

"They are a bad bunch of people - I realise these are serious words to use - and, as everyone says, they're interested in getting their hands on Railtrack so they get valuable commercial land in the centre of every town and city in this country, because they're interested in property development rather than running trains. They're a bad bunch, I'm afraid."

Railtrack denied her claims that the management was going to make huge sums from the sale.

Ms Short also attacked a bonus scheme that could double the salaries of six top Railtrack executives.

The hefty sweetener for investors is aimed at kick-starting

the controversial £1.8bn flotation that has been fiercely attacked by Labour, and will be the subject of a Parliamentary debate on Wednesday. The Opposition is threatening to reduce the returns to investors by imposing tougher regulation if it gets into power.

As well as luring City institutions to buy the shares, the extra payout will allow private buyers to earn income over the next 12 months that will dwarf anything they can get from a building society, even without allowing for the prospect of a gain in the value of the shares.

The extra dividend, to be paid in October, will be in addition to the normal interim and final dividends of just over £100m

that Railtrack will pay out of its profits for the financial year that began this month.

With the second payment on the shares not due until April 1997, private investors can take advantage of two full years' worth of tax allowances for PEP savings schemes. The arrangements mean that investors will receive more than £100m in dividends - the extra £70m in October and a normal interim dividend of more than £30m in February - before they have to pay the second instalment on their shares next year.

The Government had been hoping to raise as much as £2bn from the sale of Railtrack next month but has suffered a series of blows to its hopes.

These included the announcement last week that Roger Salmon - regulator of the train operating companies rather than Railtrack - is to leave more than a year early.

Fears about safety have also prompted half of Railtrack's senior managers and more than four in five of its middle managers to oppose the sell-off of the company, according to a poll released today.

Managers spoke of "accidents waiting to happen" and "safety systems not in place" as reasons for their opposition to the sell-off. The poll findings are being sent to all MPs ahead of Wednesday's House of Commons debate.

The safety fears come in a secret postal ballot conducted by the white-collar union, the Transport Salaried Staff Association, with the results published today by the campaign group Save Our Railways. The group is also to launch a new legal challenge to the sell-off.

The prospectus for the flotation, to be published today, will include a reprint of a speech by Ms Short setting out Labour's plans to tighten regulation, renege subsidies and eventually return the railways to public control.

The prospectus is expected to confirm that the Government plans to sell 100 per cent of Railtrack. It will also disclose that while the directors receive no share options - in a bid to avoid

"fat-cat" controversy - there will be a long-term management incentive scheme paying up to 40 per cent of basic salary that includes the award of actual shares rather than options.

The highest-paid director last year was Norman Broadbent, the finance director, who received £195,000 including a bonus, £2,000 more than John Edmonds, the chief executive, while Robert Horton, the three-days-a-week chairman, was paid £139,000.

Despite the controversy, the scale of the sweeteners looks set to undermine Labour's attempt to knock the sale, because it was hard to detect any signs last week that the City was alarmed about Labour's proposals.

Bristol & West takeover

JOHN WILLCOCK

Bristol & West Building Society will announce today that it is abandoning its mutual status and will be taken over by Bank of Ireland in a deal worth an estimated £600m-£650m.

While the UK's ninth-biggest society and Ireland's second-biggest bank both refused to comment on "speculation," sources close to both institutions confirmed yesterday that the proposed deal would be announced today.

It will mean "windfall" payments to up to 1.4 million Bristol & West customers worth between £750 and £1,000. The UK's ninth-biggest society was forced to close its doors to new accounts last Thursday in a bid to stop thousands of speculators from clogging up its normal operations.

The society does not, however, have any plans to stop so-called "carpetbaggers" who did succeed in opening accounts recently from sharing in the windfall payments if the deal goes through.

City sources say Bristol & West in effect put itself up for auction several months ago, as the flight from mutualism gathered pace in the building society movement.

Northern Rock has just announced plans to float on the stock market while National & Provincial last week won approval from its members to sell to Abbey National.

The other interested parties looking at Bristol & West included Allied Irish Banks and National Australia Bank. Bank of Ireland and AIB have both been looking at UK societies for over a year, and have both bought UK mortgage books from former centralised mortgage lenders.

Other predators that are thought to have eyed Bristol & West include BAT and Prudential.

Bank of Ireland already has more than 20 branches in the UK and a direct mortgage operation. Bank of Ireland Mortgages.

Analysts pointed out last week that the bank will thus be expanding its UK mortgage presence just as the housing market is showing the first real signs of recovery in years.

The takeover will be subject to approval by the society's members, who will have to vote by a large majority in favour. Recent similar votes suggest that the deal will get overwhelming support, however, since the public now sees such bids simply as a source of cash bonuses.

Domestic customers stay with British Gas

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Government hopes for a spectacular start to competition in the domestic gas market as set to be dashed. Fewer than 30,000 customers plan to abandon British Gas in favour of other suppliers on the kick-off date of 29 April for the initial trial.

This will be a severe disappointment to the Government. Some industry sources had been predicting a switch of 60,000. Ofgas, the industry watchdog, had privately earmarked 50,000 - 10 per cent of customers in the South-west where the initial phase is to go ahead.

Must rival companies, which include electricity firms and North Sea producers, are unwilling to comment on the extent of their inroads into the market. South Western Electricity's gas division, one of the most aggressive of the newcomers, said: "We cannot give you any numbers at the moment. It has a certain commercial sensitivity."

According to industry insiders,

one large company is so dismayed by its lack of penetration that it is considering changing its name.

The final figures for those going over to new suppliers on 29 April have by now been given to British Gas' pipeline arm, Transco, in order to ensure a smooth transition. British Gas declined to comment on the figures but one company source said: "There have not been as many as expected. It does show that a lot of people want to stay with British Gas."

The sluggish take-off is, however, a double-edged sword for British Gas, which will face tough regulation until competition is established. The company feels it cannot drop prices in the South-west to match cuts of 15 per cent and more being offered by rivals, for fear of being seen to act anti-competitively.

A company spokesman said: "We cannot go out and compete on a level playing field until market share has gone. That is what the whole process is all about. It is important to remember that these are the first tiny

steps in an evolution that will take place over two years as competition spreads throughout the UK."

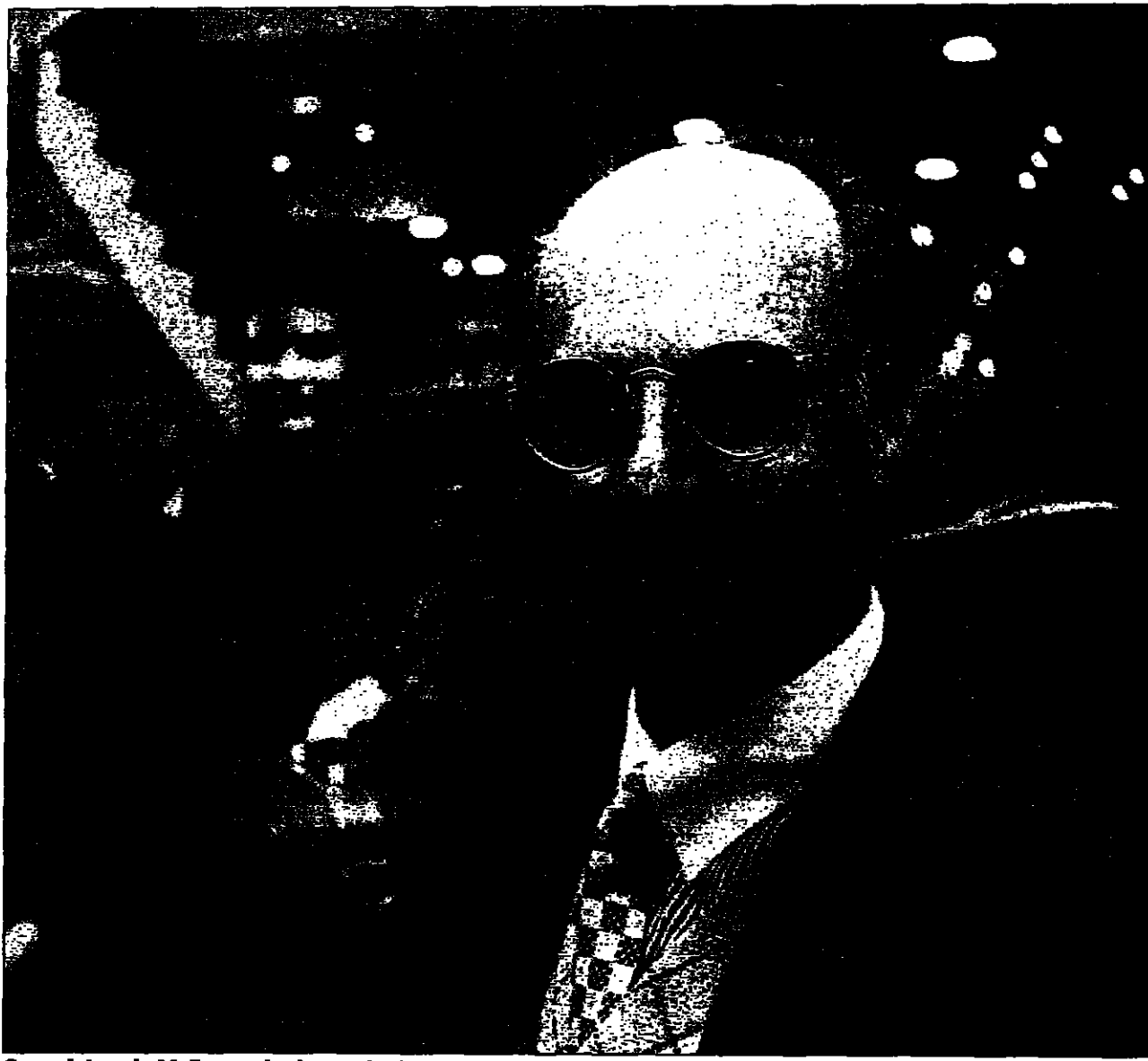
Many in the industry will blame the initial disappointment on aggressive or misleading doorstep selling techniques by some firms. Swob and CalorTex have been criticised by the Gas Consumers Council, which was outraged by complaints from customers in the area. Swob was also severely rebuked by local trading standards officers.

Swob's gas arm had 41,000 potential customers but many of those are thought to have later retracted. A company source admitted to a "large number" of subsequent rejections.

Ofgas is now launching a campaign to inform customers that they have seven days to change their mind after signing up to a supplier as the result of an unsolicited visit.

The GCC has also issued warnings. Ian Powe, its director, said: "Our advice is to sign nothing until people know what British Gas intends to offer customers."

Mulberry hopes to stamp its mark on the alternative market



Coveted brand: Mulberry, the luxury leather goods maker which sees itself as Britain's answer to designers like Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Ralph Lauren, plans to join the Alternative Investment Market. Its successful marketing of leather goods, hom furnishings and clothes in classic English country style more than doubled sales to £25.3m in the five years to 1995. At least 70 per cent of its output is exported each year.

The placing of a quarter of its shares next month is likely to

value the company at more than £30m. The funds raised will repay institutional investors. Roger Saul (above) - who founded the company in 1971 and remains head of design - and his family will retain most of the remaining shares. Mr Saul said Mulberry, a significant employer in its Somerset factories, could grow substantially. It has 51 retail outlets, including a flagship store in London's Bond Street, and sells to over 1,000 wholesalers in 32 countries.

Photograph: Jane Baker

Price for BBC arm upgraded

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Expectations of the amount the privatisation of the BBC's transmission services will fetch have been upgraded sharply, following the recent sale of NTL, the private-sector TV transmission company, to International CableTel for £235m.

Earmarked for privatisation by the Government, BBC Transmission had been expected to generate about £180m, of which a proportion would go directly to the Treasury to account for direct government payments for the World Service. But, according to industry sources, the operation could now fetch as much as £250m, following the benchmark set by the NTL sale.

The BBC has declined to comment on the privatisation. But it is believed that senior managers have been encouraged by the premium price achieved for NTL, which has a national network similar to that of the public service broadcaster.

NTL, formerly part of the now-defunct Independent Broadcasting Authority, provides services to ITV and Channel 4, and has won the licence to transmit the new Channel 5. It is also a leader in the emerging digital market, and is expected to play a role in the introduction of digital terrestrial television, promised for later this decade.

The privatisation preparations are being handled by a special committee at the BBC,

which is currently reviewing all the transmission assets. The Corporation is to determine exactly which of these will be sold off. For example, some of what is now part of BBC Transmission, in fact, related to outside broadcasting facilities, which will be retained.

The timetable for the sell-off has not yet been determined. The BBC is waiting until the new Broadcasting Bill, of which the second reading begins this week in the Commons, is passed, probably by the summer. It is believed that the sale could be completed by the end of the year.

Under its plan, the BBC will be guaranteed service from the operation's new owners at a price not to exceed current levels. Moreover, it will share in the benefits of any cost savings achieved by the buyer.

It is unclear whether NTL's new owner, CableTel, will be allowed to bid, as there could be monopoly concerns.

Other possible bidders include Racal, the electronics company, BT and Carlton, the television company, which has declared an interest in broadcast services.

The BBC has said the privatisation does not mark the start of a round of asset sales. Separately, there are concerns that a sale to NTL would place Britain's entire terrestrial television infrastructure into foreign hands. CableTel, a leading UK cable operator, is listed in New York and is overwhelmingly held by US shareholders.

Hope slips in small business

The owners of Europe's small and medium-sized businesses are becoming less optimistic about the commercial environment, according to the latest twice-yearly European Enterprise Index, writes John Willcock.

The survey by 31 across five European economies including Britain also shows that entrepreneurs are more positive about their own companies' prospects, but even in this area confidence among them is slipping.

Uncertainty about their economic future, which emerged last year after a period of improved confidence, is on the increase.

British small firms remain the least pessimistic of all the countries surveyed, but even in the UK businesses' confidence about their future performance has declined significantly since the last survey.

The Pan-European Economy Index, one part of 31's survey, shows a sharp decline in entrepreneurs' views on the state of the commercial environment to 41 from -27 at the end of last year.

Regarding the commercial environment only the British give a positive, although declining, rating from +22 to +8, whereas all their Continental neighbours are more pessimistic.

The French are the gloomiest, with a decline in the commercial environment from +10 to -42.

Lang gives more weight to small shareholders

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

In a move prefiguring a government campaign this summer to emphasise the benefits of share ownership, Ian Lang, the Trade and Industry Secretary, will this week announce proposals designed to give small shareholders more say at companies' annual meetings.

The Government is concerned that "fat cat" rows about executive pay have tarnished the image of shareholding and handed the opposition an easy political target. A series of measures will be announced by Treasury ministers within the next few months to boost the appeal of private shareholding in the run-up to the general election.

Ministers privately acknowledge that, despite the massive privatisation programme, the Government has not realised its ambitions for a "shareholder

democracy". This week's DTI measures, first announced in November following an earlier recommendation from the House of Commons Employment Select Committee, come shortly before the 30 April British Gas annual meeting. Shareholder outrage over huge rises for then chief executive Cedric Brown at the British Gas meeting a year ago was one of the factors forcing the Government to take action on shareholder rights.

The DTI's proposed changes to the Companies Act are expected to force companies to pick up the bill for circulating resolutions put forward by individual shareholders, as long as certain conditions are met. The conditions will include enough support from other shareholders and timeliness in submitting the resolution.

The cost of putting an independent resolution to the vote at the annual meeting can run

into thousands of pounds, and companies will be reluctant to meet the cost. But Mr Lang has recognised the importance shareholders attach to the ability to raise issues at annual general meetings.

Some companies have made it steadily more difficult through amendments to their articles of association for their private shareholders to have a voice. Pensions and Investment Research Consultants, a corporate governance research group, has reported that six companies - National Westminster Bank, Welsh Water, BTR, Williams Holdings, Rank and Royal Insurance - have recently taken such steps.

Shareholder frustration led to chaotic scenes at last year's British Gas meeting, with the introduction of a live pig named Cedric and television reporters resorting to smuggling cameras into the heavily guarded meeting.

IN BRIEF

• Petrol forecourt shops in Britain account for a higher share of retail sales than in either Germany or France, thanks to the National Lottery. Sales through forecourt outlets reached £2.9bn last year, according to the retail researchers Corporate Intelligence, accounting for 2 per cent of retail sales compared with 1.6 per cent in Germany and 0.3 per cent in France. The UK figure was 40 per cent higher than the previous year due mainly to Lottery ticket sales.

• Vanguard Medica, a bio-pharmaceuticals company, is to seek a listing on the Stock Exchange. The company has a portfolio of five compounds, including one being developed under an agreement with SmithKline Beecham as a migraine treatment and an anti-inflammatory treatment being developed with Eli Lilly. Its placing in May is expected to raise up to £40m for development of its portfolio.

• Kvaerner, the Norwegian conglomerate, has agreed to sell its 26.3 per cent shareholding in Tampella of Finland, as part of the process of concentrating on its international engineering businesses following its acquisition of Trafalgar House. Tampella is to be sold to Sweden's Sandvik group for around £55m.

• Waterfall Holdings, a leisure and entertainment group, is to join the Alternative Investment Market through a placing of its shares. The group, which includes night clubs, cue sports clubs and "venue bars", also announced the acquisition of nine snooker and pool clubs from First Leisure.

• Jardine Fleming Group is reshuffling the senior executives of its London fund management arm at the same time as is under investigation by Inro, the investment regulator. Robert Thomas is to resign as managing director of Jardine Fleming Asset Management and Mark White, a former Jardine director in Hong Kong, will replace him.

• The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development comes under fire today as its annual meeting opens in Sofia, Bulgaria. The magazine *Euromoney* argues that the controversial bank frequently favours French companies when awarding contracts. It says an "unreasonably large proportion" of the bank's senior staff is French. The article also cites a number of cases of conflicts of interest in the award of contracts.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Chg	YTD %
FTSE 100	3766.80	+11.2	+0.3	3781.30	3639.50	3.94			
FTSE 250	4408.00	+22.7	+0.5	4408.00	4015.30	3.37			
FTSE 350	1897.90	+5.8	+0.3	1897.90	1816.60	3.81			
FT Small Cap	2123.95	+14.3	+0.7	2123.95	1954.05	3.04			
FT All Share	1876.50	+7.0	+0.4	1876.50	1791.85	3.75			
New York	5532.99	-150.3	-2.6	5689.74	3832.08	2.11			
Tokyo	21660.47	+189.3	+0.9	21781.70	19734.70	0.721			
Hong Kong	10849.80	-290.1	-2.6	11584.99	10073.39	3.301			
Frankfurt	2511.78	+18.6	+0.7	2530.02	2253.86	1.851			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Money Market Rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	5.84	6.38	8.07	8.32	8.16	8.33			
US	5.44	6.03	6.54	7.04	6.84	7.34			
Japan	0.97	1.00	1.96	2.79					
Germany	3.31	3.34	4.45	7.06	7.20				

BOND YIELDS									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	5.84	6.38	8.07	8.32	8.16	8.33			
US	5.44	6.03	6.54	7.04	6.84	7.34			
Japan	0.97	1.00	1.96	2.79					
Germany	3.31	3.34	4.45	7.06	7.20				

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	5.84	6.38	8.07	8.32	8.16	8.33			
US	5.44	6.03	6.54	7.04	6.84	7.34			
Japan	0.97	1.00	1.96	2.79					
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CURRENCIES									
UK interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	5.84	6.38	8.07	8.32	8.16	8.33			
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Japan	0.97	1.00	1.96	2.79					
Germany	3.31	3.34	4.45	7.06	7.20				

US interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
US	5.44	6.03	6.54	7.04	6.84	7.34			
UK	5.84	6.38	8.07	8.32	8.16	8.33			
Japan	0.97	1.00	1.96	2.79					
Germany	3.31	3.34	4.45	7.06	7.20				

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Misplaced fears over competitive devaluations

GAVYN DAVIES

Any suggestion that the outs should be forced to fix their currencies within narrow bands against the euro, with punishments for those who fail to comply, is simply outrageous

Opponents of economic and monetary union have frequently warned that the premature arrival of a single currency could threaten the unity of the EU. Although these warnings are usually expressed in hyperbolic language, and stem from sources who will seek any opportunity to throw sand in the wheels of integration, they cannot be entirely dismissed. The creation of two separate monetary clubs within a single economic space has never been tried before, and may give rise to problems which will seriously undermine the political coherence of the EU.

Never has this risk been clearer than at the weekend, when finance ministers in Verona started to grapple with the problem of the "ins and outs". The future EMU ins (notably France but also Germany) apparently agreed to impose a regime on the future outs (notably the UK, but also Italy, Spain and Scandinavia) that Britain sees as unnecessary, authoritarian and unworkable. This problem was not foreseen when the Maastricht Treaty was drafted, since the belief then was that most countries would be in from the start, or at least that they would mostly be on a smooth glide path to imminent entry. The idea that the outs may be a semi-permanent club, representing at least half of the EU's GDP, only began to dawn last year, and even then the problem would have been largely ignored were it not for the fact that the economic performance of the outs was temporarily rather better than that of the ins. The ins decided that this must be stopped.

Their thinking is this. Membership of the single economic space confers huge advantages in terms of market access, free trade and potential economies of scale. But it also requires certain obligations to be accepted

by all. These obligations, according to the ins, involve not only a common regulatory framework and free capital movements, but extend also to the behaviour of the exchange rate. The outs must not be allowed to indulge in "competitive devaluations" which bring them an "unfair" advantage in the single market.

This means that a new ERM mechanism ("ERM 2") must be agreed, with the outs accepting that their exchange rates must be directly linked to the euro. There is talk of imposing fines or exclusions from the single market on countries which fail to comply with this obligation. Furthermore, according to Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer, the onus for keeping the exchange rates within their new bands against the euro should rest explicitly on the outs, since otherwise the new European Central Bank would have to accept a duty to prop up weak currencies, which could prove inflationary for the ins. In addition, he suggested that the initiation of changes in central parities should come

not from the governments concerned, but from a "supranational authority", namely the head of the ECB.

Quite apart from inflaming British concerns about national sovereignty, there have been questions about whether any of this is legal. The UK has argued that access to the single market is an inalienable right of all member states, regardless of exchange rate relationships. But the French and others have pointed out that Article 109a of the Maastricht Treaty states that "each member state shall treat its exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest", and they claim that this gives legitimacy to their calls for an ERM 2.

The British are surely right about this, but in any case this is not a matter which can be settled in the law courts. The key questions are whether the ins have an economic case, and whether they are strong enough politically to impose their wishes on the outs. On both counts, the outs are on strong ground.

To start with the economics, there is

something very odd about the position being adopted by the ins. Here is a group of countries, which conspicuously failed to make ERM 1 work in 1992/93, now seeking to impose ERM 2 on a completely different set of countries. What is more, the ins are simultaneously managing to argue that it is in their own vital interests to give up the right to devalue their currencies, while also maintaining that other countries will secure great national advantage by "competitively" devaluing against them. Surely both cannot be true.

Admittedly, this line of argument has been encouraged by the tide of events following the break-up of ERM 1 in 1992. Since then, competitiveness changes triggered by exchange rate devaluations have "stuck" for much longer than usual, in the sense that they have not been simply washed away by higher inflation in devaluing countries like the UK and Italy.

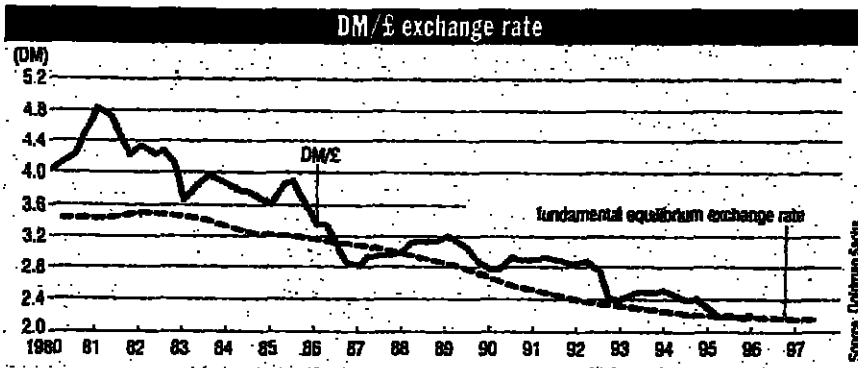
This is very unusual by past historical standards, but it will probably prove to be either temporary or an unrepeatable fluke. We have already seen a large rise in the lira this year, eroding much of Italy's earlier competitive gains, while sterling never moved far out of line with its fundamental equilibrium, at least as estimated by Goldman Sachs (see graph). So the old rule that changes in nominal exchange rates within Europe cannot bring about permanent changes in real competitiveness probably still applies.

And in any case, the outs are not staying out because they want to retain the right to devalue. Most will be committed to joining the single currency as soon as they attain the convergence criteria and are allowed in. Competitive devaluations will be the last thing on the minds of these countries.

Britain is in a different situation since, at least under the Tories, this country could well become a permanent out. But the important reason for staying out is not to enjoy the right to devalue the currency on a continuous basis. Instead, it is to maintain the right to adjust monetary policy independently of that being forced on the Continent. Certainly, this may involve the exchange rate going up or down for short periods as interest rates vary in response to economic shocks, but that is very different from seeking a permanent competitive gain from devaluation, even if it were possible.

There is no recent instance of a large nation, never mind the Tories, deliberately engaging in a competitive devaluation in order to steal export orders from its neighbours. Nor would the suggested ERM 2, at least with narrow bands, be at all likely to work in practice. Unlike ERM 1, where there was in principle a commitment from all countries to intervene as necessary to maintain the bands, the idea now is for the entire onus to be placed on the outs. Since it is obvious from the outset that the UK, among others, does not have the political will to maintain the bands, such a system would be a sitting duck for the currency speculators.

Perhaps something like the present ERM — with theoretical 15 per cent bands that nobody takes very seriously — would be just about an acceptable, though cynical, compromise to keep the ins happy. But any suggestion that the outs should be forced to fix their currencies within narrow bands against the euro, with punishments for those which fail to comply, and with no support from the ins, is simply outrageous. For once, the British government would be fully justified in using its veto to stop this.



Pay awards show lid is on inflation

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Fresh evidence that inflation remains under control and that industrial efficiency is improving emerges today with the publication of the latest figures from CBI's Pay Databank.

Wage awards in the manufacturing and service sectors during the busiest time of the year for pay bargaining showed no signs of edging up as some commentators had predicted. Settlements in the manufacturing sector averaged 3.6 per cent in the first quarter of the year, the same as in the three months to February. Service sector pay awards declined slightly, to 3.6 per cent compared with 3.8 per cent in the three months ending in February.

In the wake of Labour's victory in Staffordshire East, ministers will take some comfort from data indicating that man-

ufacturing is becoming more efficient. Productivity gains averaged 4.3 per cent in the first quarter of the year against 3.4 per cent in the previous quarter.

The CBI found that a wider range of pay settlements compared with the year ending July 1995. The spread may indicate that companies are increasingly emphasising their own profitability in pay negotiations, rather than any "going rate".

Official figures due on Wednesday are expected to show no change in February in the underlying average earnings figure from 3.25 per cent.

A separate survey of 289,000 company accounts by Dun & Bradstreet reports that during the last three full-years the share of the wage bill in total turnover has climbed significantly from 25.4 per cent to 28.7 per cent.

With net profits and dividends also up, the increase has been paid for by efficiency gains.

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Even by the standards of the former communist block, it sounds like an unlikely proposition. Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea, last of the old Stalinist republics, has become an economic basket case. Fuel and power shortages have brought industry to a near-standstill. Agriculture, always a medieval affair, with ox carts out-numbering tractors, has been wiped out in parts of the country by disastrous floods.

Only the million-strong army appears to be in reasonable

working order. Last week it once again rattled nerves from Tokyo to Washington with a series of incursions on the tense North-South border. The classified ad above is, so far, imaginary, but the scene it describes is accurate. After 50 years of isolationism, sabre-rattling and economic decay, North Korea is looking for business.

Korean affairs are riven with paradoxes, and this one is no exception. From its bloody birth out of the ruins of the 1950-53 civil war, North Korea staked its existence on the doctrine known as Juche — self-reliance. At the best of times this was a fiction, but until five years ago the country could at least get by, tied over with hand-outs and cut-price rice from China and the Soviet Union, which also provided markets for its cheap clothes and machinery.

But with the thawing of the Cold War, all this changed. To Moscow and Peking, Pyong-

yang's crude rhetoric and the pseudo-religious cult surrounding its "Dear Leader", Kim Jong-il, became an embarrassment. After Russia and China established trade and

But at the same time, it is pursuing a parallel and wholly contradictory project: the establishment of a limited free trade system and the acquisition of the life-giving foreign cur-

VIEW FROM KOREA

diplomatic relations with its hated rivals in South Korea, the North's dilemma became acute; either cast off the mask of self-reliance and risk its only source of legitimacy, or watch its economy fall to pieces.

The problem has been tackled with a typical mixture of aggression and denial. Since 1994, when Kim Jong-il's father, the founding president and "Great Leader", Kim Il-Sung, died, Pyongyang's public pronouncements have become ever more bellicose and uncompromising.

In fact, international business is nothing new to North Koreans. For years, they have operated an enthusiastic barter economy with Chinese traders on the northern border. Unknown billions of yen flow from expatriate businessmen running loan companies and pin-ball arcades in Japan. But hopes of true economic salvation are concentrated in an area known as the Rajin-Songbhong Free Trade and Economic Zone, a little-known experiment in the

controlled capitalism that has reinvigorated southern China. The zone is part of the much bigger Tumen River project, sponsored by \$300m of United Nations money and encompassing the adjacent regions of China and Russia. So far, it is little more than an intriguing idea: of the \$3bn being sought by North Korea, only \$200m has been promised, and little more than 10 per cent of that has actually materialised. Chinese, Japanese and Russian companies remain the biggest participants, and cautious investments by giants such as Daewoo make South Korea Pyongyang's fourth-biggest trading partner. But the project has also attracted the interest of a number of surprisingly big Western names. General Motors executives have made discreet visits, and even Coca-Cola looked at opportunities there before strict American rules about trade with an enemy

state made the whole thing too difficult. For non-US companies, however, the opportunities are wide open. The Dutch bank ING and Hong Kong's Peregrine both have representative offices in Pyongyang, and last year Shell Pacific invested \$500,000 in leasing a waterside plot in the Free Trade Zone.

The principal motivation is the potential of a frontier land on the edge of the world, the edge of politics, and on the verge of immense change. "Look at the map, and it makes sense," says a Shell Pacific executive. "China needs access to the sea and Japan is interested in a direct land bridge to Europe, apart from the shipping lanes. There's not a lot there now, but if you're taking a 25-year view then some very interesting things might happen. You could wait and wait, and one day discover that you've waited too late."

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SCIENCE

The tritium factor

The dependence of modern nuclear weapons on a rare gas could prove their undoing, writes **Donald MacKenzie**

The awesome power of modern nuclear arsenals conceals a deep vulnerability. Sophisticated nuclear weapons are dependent upon tritium, a rare radioactive gas that decays inexorably by 5 per cent per year. Unless their tritium is replaced, the destructive capacity of the weapons wastes away.

Tritium dependence is a serious problem for the United States, which has been unable to produce any since 1988. It may also become a troublesome issue for the UK, whose tritium is produced in ageing reactors at Chapelcross on the Solway Firth in southern Scotland. On the other hand, control over tritium could help enforce comprehensive nuclear disarmament. It offers a way of dealing with the fear that a nuclear state might circumvent world-wide disarmament by hiding away a few of its weapons.

Surprisingly little has been published on the role of tritium in nuclear weapons. Attention was drawn to the issue in an article published in *New Scientist* in 1984 by Tom Wilkie (now the *Independent's* science editor). Tritium decay means that "old age can kill the Bomb", he wrote.

The US Department of Energy has just produced a bulky environmental impact statement saying why it needs tritium. All US nuclear weapons are now tritium-dependent, it says. Currently, the US is managing to live off its tritium stockpile, recycling the tritium from warheads decommissioned as part of the arms-control process. However, this source will start to run dry early in the next century.

Tritium is a form (an isotope) of hydrogen, the simplest element. Hydrogen atoms usually consist of a single electron orbiting a single proton. Tritium's nucleus contains two neutral particles (neutrons) as well as the positively-charged proton. The different nucleus gives tritium a fatally attractive property. Under extreme temperatures and pressures, tritium atoms fuse with deuterium (another form of hydrogen, containing one neutron) to release both neutrons and large amounts of energy.

This fusion reaction is the key to the hydrogen bombs that are far more destructive even than the atomic bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the Department of Energy needs tritium not so much for the explosive power of hydrogen bombs but for its role in "boosting" atomic explosions, which in turn are used to set off the fusion reaction which powers the hydrogen bomb. In atomic bombs, a shell of chemical high explosives is used to compress a spherical core of uranium or plutonium. Even in 1945, however, weapons scientists knew that the resultant nuclear chain reaction could be intensified greatly by injecting a mixture of tritium and deuterium into the core. The interest is not in creating a mini-hydrogen bomb but in the neutrons the fusion produces: this accelerates the chain reaction in the uranium or plutonium so making the fission bomb more efficient.

Boosting was first employed in US and Soviet nuclear tests in the early 1950s. Only with boosting is it possible to build small, powerful weapons that can be carried by cruise missiles or multi-warhead ballistic missiles. The first atomic bombs weighed around four tons, and a heavy bomber was needed to deliver each one to its target.

Military tritium has traditionally been made by irradiating capsules of lithium in a nuclear reactor, then extracting the tritium in a specialised separation plant. However, by the late 1980s safety problems had closed the last of the reactors at Savannah River, South Carolina, used to produce tritium. The US nuclear industry has proposed building a new military reactor, but there are fears that its price tag of \$6,000m might escalate uncontrollably.

Instead, the Department of Energy is investigating two options. One is to convert an existing civil reactor (or complete one whose construction has been abandoned). Using a civil reactor to produce military tritium risks blurring the distinction between civil and military nuclear energy central to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The alternative is an approach as yet untried on a large scale: to produce tritium by bombarding either lithium or one of the isotopes of helium in a massive, new, continuously-operating particle accelerator. This would be 3,940ft long, buried 40-50ft underground at Savannah River. It would take five years to build, cost around \$3,000m, and draw up to 550 megawatts of electric power from the grid, enough for a medium-sized city. However, the accelerator lacks the reactor's potential for a catastrophic radiation-releasing accident, and would also produce much less radioactive waste.

If pressure for comprehensive nuclear disarmament were to grow, tritium's significance would be quite different. Rigorous control over tritium could make it significantly harder to cheat on a disarmament agreement. Tritium has civil uses in medical isotopes but the world's largest supplier, Amersham International, uses at most 0.05 grams of tritium a year. This is about one hundredth of the only published figure for military applications: 4g per warhead.

Any realistic agreement to abolish nuclear weapons is likely to be phased in over 20 or 30 years. Over that period, a hidden nuclear weapon would require extensive maintenance. Tritium decay would weaken boosting, reducing the weapon's destructive power. The unboosted yield of a modern American warhead is just 500 tons – less than a fortieth of the explosive power of the Nagasaki bomb. So a violator might feel compelled to hide away not just weapons, but also a stockpile of tritium. Because that stockpile would decay, the violator would also need to try to hide (or covertly construct) a facility for separating out the decay products, purifying the tritium, and sealing it into pressure vessels ready for use.

Less advanced nuclear states probably possess simple, unboosted weapons that do not use tritium. However, such weapons are larger and harder to deliver to their targets. They also have vulnerabilities. Most nuclear weapons programmes have begun with designs that use radioactive polonium to produce a sudden reaction. Polonium decays much faster than tritium, so stockpiling it for decades is impossible.

Tritium controls will never on their own make nuclear disarmament watertight. However, these controls are worth investigating as supplements to the more usual ways of enforcing disarmament. Tritium can be an instrument for peace as well as a tool of war.

The writer holds a personal chair in sociology at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Knowing Machines: Essays on Technical Change* (MIT Press).



Bigger bang: tritium allows a much larger yield from a smaller nuclear bomb
Associated Press

nucleus contains two neutral particles (neutrons) as well as the positively-charged proton. The different nucleus gives tritium a fatally attractive property. Under extreme temperatures and pressures, tritium atoms fuse with deuterium (another form of hydrogen, containing one neutron) to release both neutrons and large amounts of energy.

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Any realistic agreement to abolish nuclear weapons is likely to be phased in over 20 or 30 years. Over that period, a hidden nuclear weapon would require extensive maintenance. Tritium decay would weaken boosting, reducing the weapon's destructive power. The unboosted yield of a modern American warhead is just 500 tons – less than a fortieth of the explosive power of the Nagasaki bomb. So a violator might feel compelled to hide away not just weapons, but also a stockpile of tritium. Because that stockpile would decay, the violator would also need to try to hide (or covertly construct) a facility for separating out the decay products, purifying the tritium, and sealing it into pressure vessels ready for use.

Less advanced nuclear states probably possess simple, unboosted weapons that do not use tritium. However, such weapons are larger and harder to deliver to their targets. They also have vulnerabilities. Most nuclear weapons programmes have begun with designs that use radioactive polonium to produce a sudden reaction. Polonium decays much faster than tritium, so stockpiling it for decades is impossible.

Tritium controls will never on their own make nuclear disarmament watertight. However, these controls are worth investigating as supplements to the more usual ways of enforcing disarmament. Tritium can be an instrument for peace as well as a tool of war.

The writer holds a personal chair in sociology at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Knowing Machines: Essays on Technical Change* (MIT Press).

nucleus contains two neutral particles (neutrons) as well as the positively-charged proton. The different nucleus gives tritium a fatally attractive property. Under extreme temperatures and pressures, tritium atoms fuse with deuterium (another form of hydrogen, containing one neutron) to release both neutrons and large amounts of energy.

This fusion reaction is the key to the hydrogen bombs that are far more destructive even than the atomic bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the Department of Energy needs tritium not so much for the explosive power of hydrogen bombs but for its role in "boosting" atomic explosions, which in turn are used to set off the fusion reaction which powers the hydrogen bomb.

In atomic bombs, a shell of chemical high explosives is used to compress a spherical core of uranium or plutonium. Even in 1945, however, weapons scientists knew that the resultant nuclear chain reaction could be intensified greatly by injecting a mixture of tritium and deuterium into the core. The interest is not in creating a mini-hydrogen bomb but in the neutrons the fusion produces: this accelerates the chain reaction in the uranium or plutonium so making the fission bomb more efficient.

Boosting was first employed in US and Soviet nuclear tests in the early 1950s. Only with boosting is it possible to build small, powerful weapons that can be carried by cruise missiles or multi-warhead ballistic missiles. The first atomic bombs weighed around four tons, and a heavy bomber was needed to deliver each one to its target.

Military tritium has traditionally been made by irradiating capsules of lithium in a nuclear reactor, then extracting the tritium in a specialised separation plant. However, by the late 1980s safety problems had closed the last of the reactors at Savannah River, South Carolina, used to produce tritium. The US nuclear industry has proposed building a new military reactor, but there are fears that its price tag of \$6,000m might escalate uncontrollably.

Instead, the Department of Energy is investigating two options. One is to convert an existing civil reactor (or complete one whose construction has been abandoned). Using a civil reactor to produce military tritium risks blurring the distinction between civil and military nuclear energy central to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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With summer around the corner, a warning to campers. Life under canvas can provide the perfect conditions for bacteria to proliferate in foodstuffs, according to a new report of a gastroenteritis outbreak caused by *Salmonella enteritidis* during a camping holiday in north Wales. Thirty-three people were admitted to hospital with diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Describing the incident in *Epidemiology and Infection*, Ruairi Brugha of the Central Public Health Laboratory in Colindale, with colleagues in Cardiff and Bangor, points out that infected eggs pose a particular danger to campers. The victims in the Wales case – the first reported outbreak caused by a new type of *S. enteritidis* discovered in 1993 – were on a trip organised by a Boys and Girls Brigade group. The 12 adults and 37 children (aged nine to 17) brought tents, ovens, cooked and uncooked food from their home town 300 miles

Beware of lemon meringue pie

Microbe of the month: Bernard Dixon on the return of salmonella

away. But they had no refrigeration facilities. Three days after they arrived, 46 of the 49 members of the party went down with gastroenteritis. The condition of 33 of them soon deteriorated, and ambulances ferried the victims to hospital. Thirty-one of them had to be intravenously rehydrated.

The bacteriologists who investigated the incident found the campers had discarded the remains of the meal consumed the evening before the first symptoms appeared. Though they could not test the foods, the investigators screened samples of faeces from all the campers for disease-causing bacteria.

A comparison of these results with the food items eaten by individual campers quickly highlighted lemon meringue pie as the most likely – indeed the only – source of infection. Every one of the 42 individuals who had eaten the pie had become ill. And every one of them had *S. enteritidis* in their faeces, except one who had eaten only three or four spoonfuls. None of the faecal samples contained any other hazardous microbes.

The pie had been made from eggs, pastry, sugar and lemon powder. The eggs came from a batch laid 13 days before the outbreak, transported from the campers' home town and stored at the camp in warm summer temperatures for two days before the pie was made. Two cooks produced the pie mixture, containing 20 egg yolks, boiled it for one or two minutes

and then left it at ambient temperature for four hours. They added a meringue topping, made with egg white that had also been standing for four hours, and put portions of pie into three ovens at gas mark 6 for five to 10 minutes to brown. The pie then stood at ambient temperature for another 2-3 hours before being eaten.

Tests on the remaining six eggs failed to show *S. enteritidis*, so the investigators could not pinpoint the source of the outbreak with 100 per cent certainty. However, the dangers posed by this bacterium in eggs and egg products have become clear over the past decade (though Edwina Currie exaggerated the risk in 1988), together with other evidence,

this makes the origin of the Welsh incident virtually certain. Given that the bacterium can occur in eggs, the ways of preventing it from causing illness are to reduce its chances of growing (by refrigeration) and to kill it (by thorough cooking). On this occasion, *S. enteritidis* had ample opportunity to multiply while the eggs, pie mixture and pie were left at ambient temperature and the gas ovens were probably too

small for the amount of food being cooked, so they did not reach a temperature high enough to kill the bacteria.

Three years ago, the Government's Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food produced a report on the dangers posed by bacteria such as *S. enteritidis* in eggs. It included clear guidelines on the handling and storage of eggs. However, these need to be supplemented by advice specifically directed at campers. Meanwhile, people holidaying outdoors should use cold boxes to carry eggs, and should not prepare lightly cooked egg products under field conditions. Safer still, give up eggs completely for a few days.

Happy camping – if you stay off the eggs
Hulton Getty

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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

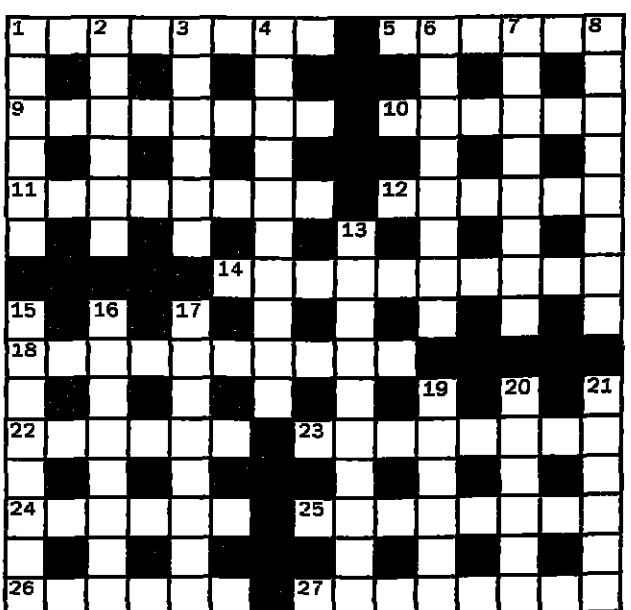
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Monday 15 April 1996

By Portia



25 Brother almost reaches West Indian island (8)
26 One who's skilful at the wheel (6)
27 Outfit let off taking part in ship game (8)

DOWN

1 Fix fellow with a gun (6)
2 Following Henry in state of agitation (6)
3 Socially acceptable to a great extent? (6)
4 He reckons to do check (10)
5 Will appeal against firm (8)
6 Given to bank's head of department (8)
7 Do nothing and gets a tan, anyway (8)
8 No longer in difficulty near the Dutch coast (3,3,4)

ACROSS

1 Drop support for reserve (4-4)
5 Dirty money hidden among Pole's loot (6)
9 Agree to increase pay (6,2)
10 Mass Eastern religion I associate with a Kingdom of old (6)
11 Ring for a very long time (8)
12 Appoint a board, say (6)
14 Positive uproar after soldiers gain promotion (10)
18 The air can't decompose natural fuel (10)
22 Many remove prohibition in Scotland (6)
23 Famous person born away at speed (8)
24 Could start country dance by popular composer (6)

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Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford and Holford Avenue, Oldham. Back issues available from Historic Newspapers, (NHS) 40499. Mailed 15 April 1996. Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office.

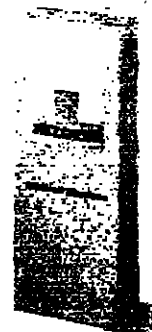
To many this concept would sound melodramatic. Not to us. Only dandruff sufferers know what a heavy cross this condition is to bear. An itchy, flaky scalp will not only cause physical distress, it can undermine your confidence, too. Our research taught us that dandruff is caused by a microbe. A medical condition demanding a reliable medical solution – First Aid.

First Aid for your dandruff.

Our solution, the Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo formula, proved so successful that it's been tried and trusted by doctors and dermatologists for years. Our shampoo cares for your hair differently. The breakthrough came when we identified and patented an ingredient that would specifically target and prevent the microbe that is the root cause of dandruff.

Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo works differently. As the microbe is prevented from returning, so too, are the itching and flaking symptoms. Unlike some harsher anti-dandruff treatments, our Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo is actually nice to use as well, being gentle and perfume free. So all you'll be aware of is how clean and healthy your hair feels.

Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo is effective, and after an initial period of using it twice weekly, you should only need to use it once a week to keep dandruff away. In between, you can wash your hair with whatever shampoo you like. You can buy a bottle from your pharmacist without prescription. To obtain your free information leaflet, call 0990 134 218.



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